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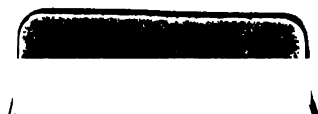
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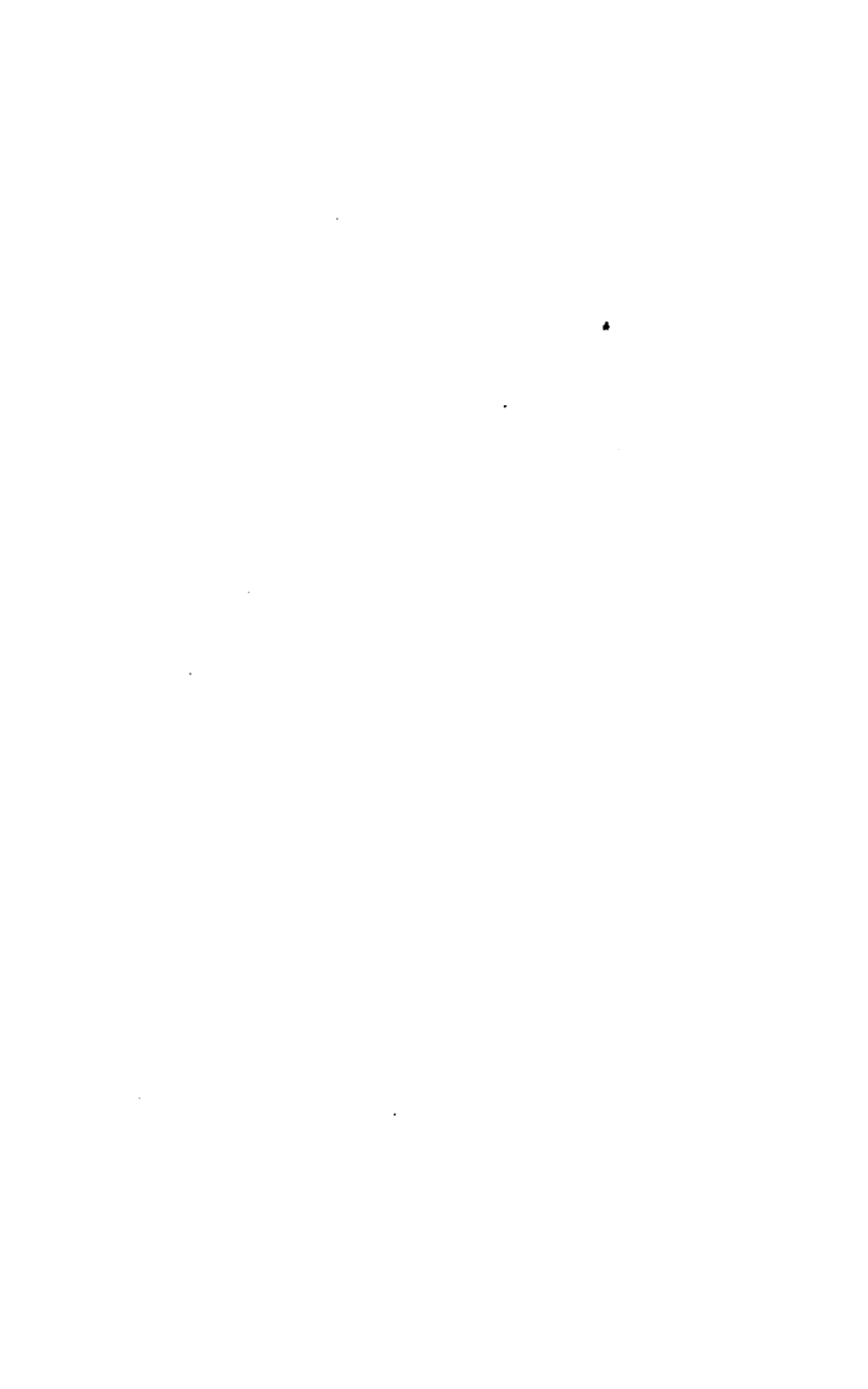
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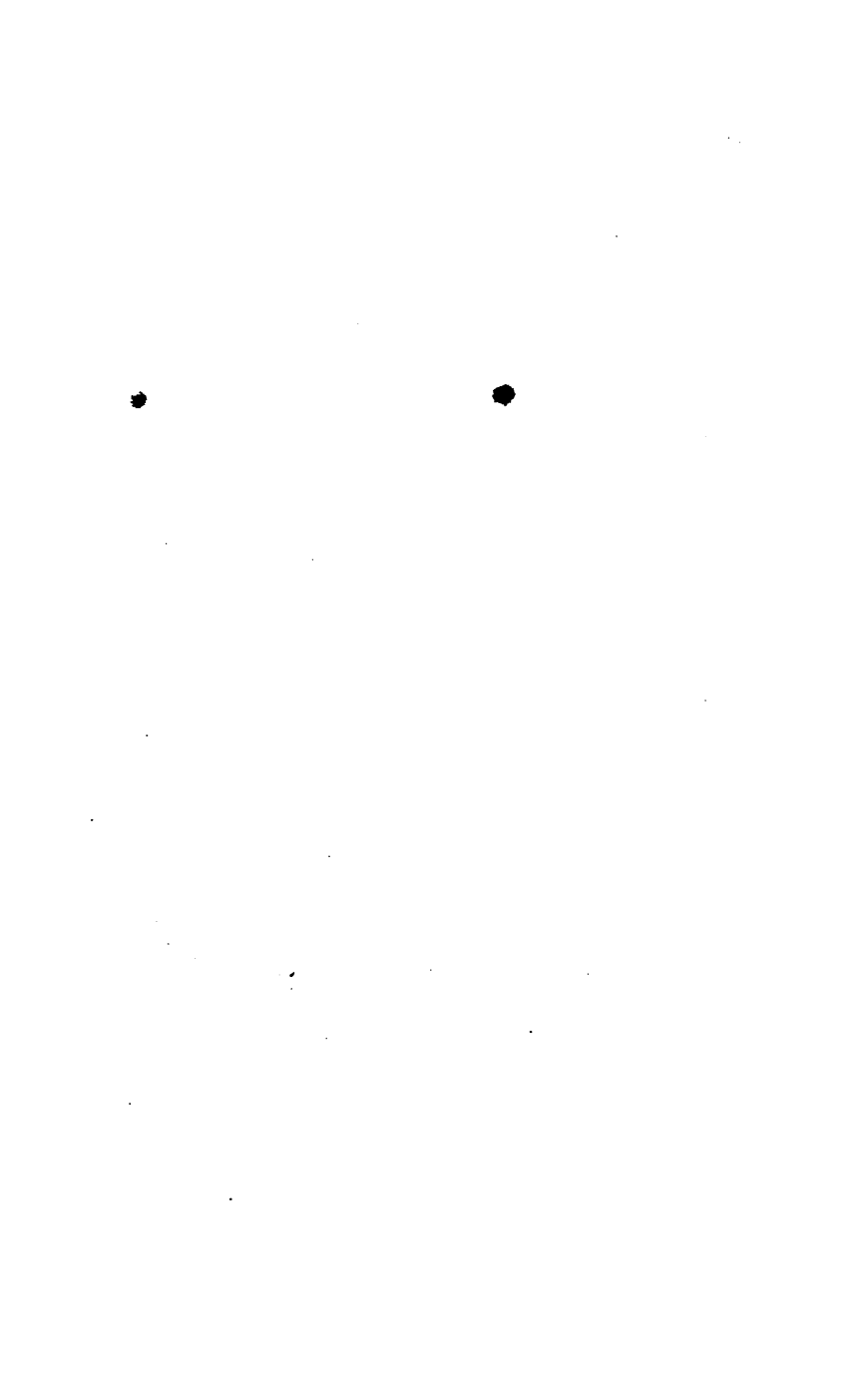
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ON MIRACLES.



ON MIRACLES:

BY

RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

"What sign showest thou, then, that we may see, and believe thee?
What dost thou work?"—THE JEWS TO JESUS.



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TO THE

REV. JOHN BROWN, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN the Dedication of one of those valuable works with which you have recently (why so late?) been enriching the stores of our English Theological Literature, you have—I will not say done me the honour, for I feel that the style of courtly compliment does not quite accord with the cordiality of mutual friendship,—but given me the heart-felt satisfaction, of publicly ranking me among the oldest of those whom you have held as one with you in that bond;—a bond of which familiarity and sacredness are equally characteristics. I delight in thus embracing the earliest opportunity of attaching my signature, with the same publicity, to the “brotherly covenant;”—and, in inscribing this little volume to you, of cordially reciprocating

cating those sentiments of esteem and affection, which, on either side alike, the designation of FRIEND necessarily implies. It is a hallowed designation. Abraham was called "the Friend of God." Those "lips" into which "grace was poured" said—"I have called you Friends." It is as friends *of* Christ, and friends *in* Christ, that we anticipate the perpetuity of the friendship. The period of life which we have both been graciously permitted to reach ensures our separation being but brief, whichever of us may be taken first away. But when, like ours, friendship is based on Christian principles, Death, though for a time it separates the friends, does not, even for that time, dissolve the friendship. Were you and I, while on earth, separated to the distance of the semi-circumference of the globe, should not we still be friends?—why, then, should we cease to be friends, when one is on earth and the other in heaven? When he who has been left behind follows to that "happy land," will it not just be a meeting again of friends who have for a season been parted? And there, the union will be purified from every alloy, and settled in the permanence of perfect unintermitting enjoyment! Every thread of roughening earthliness will be disentwined

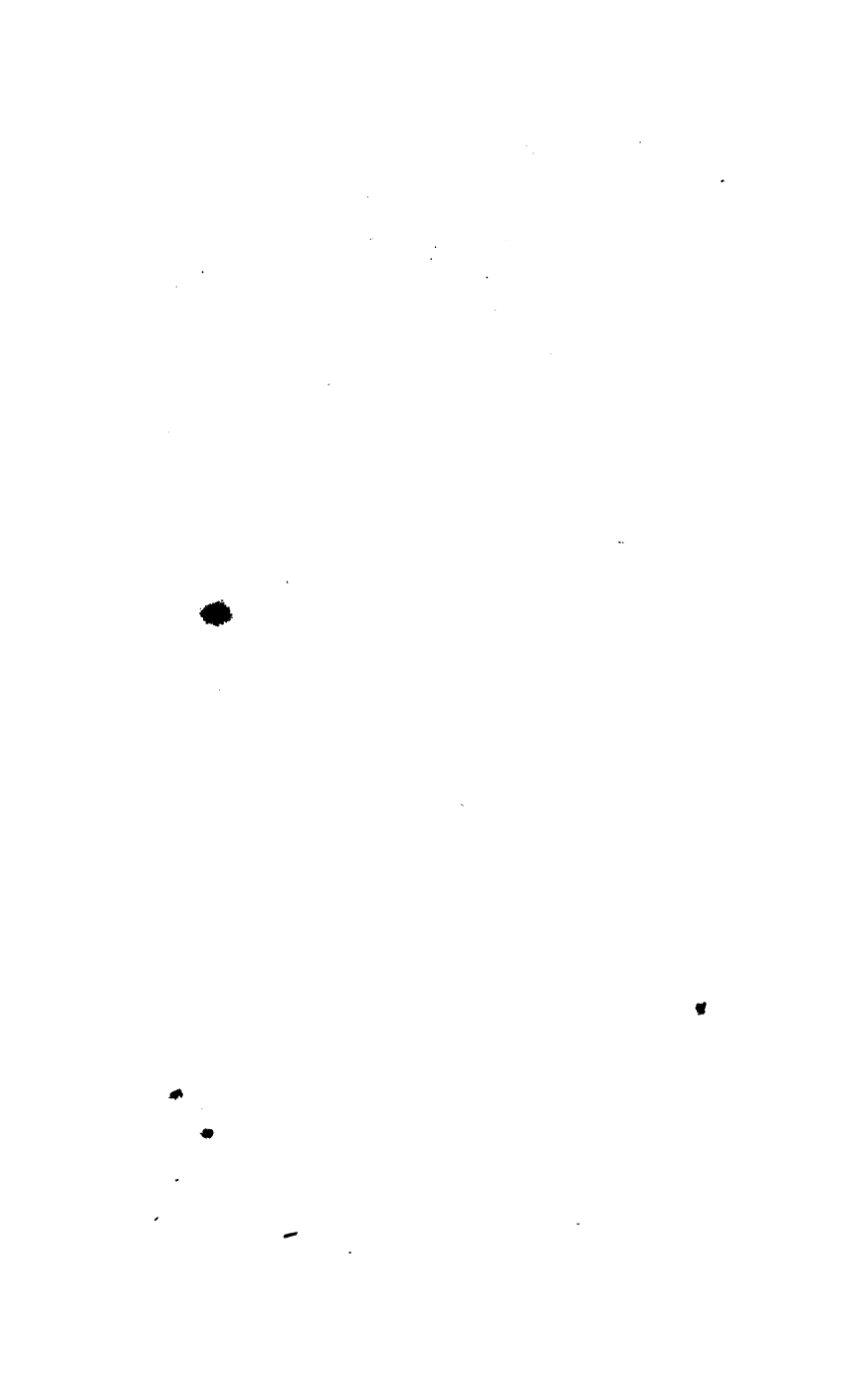
from the connecting bond. It will be soft as divine love; and yet strong and inseverable as that which unites us to the one Lord!

Delighting in the indulgence of such sentiments and of such hopes, and assuring myself of your heart-felt sympathy with them,—and, at the same time, offering to God my earnest prayers for the prolongation of your valued life, and for the blessing of our common Master on your various labours, for his glory, and for the benefit of the church and of the world, believe me,

My dear Friend and Brother,

Yours in the best of bonds,

RALPH WARDLAW.



P R E F A C E.

THE substance of the following Treatise was delivered from my pulpit, in seven Lectures, on the evenings of the first Lord's days of seven successive months, during last winter and spring. The reason for my taking up such a subject in my public ministrations will, by most of my readers, be at once rightly conjectured. It was suggested by the abounding scepticism of the times;—the new *phases*, as well as old, under which that scepticism has been discovering itself;—and the zeal, seldom if ever surpassed, with which it has been exerting itself for the dissemination of its principles;—if, indeed, distinctive principles can be considered as at all belonging to a philosophy, whose aim must, from its very nature, be the unsettling of everything rather than the settling of any thing.

I have been induced to throw these lectures into their present *Treatise* form, by three considerations. The *first* is—the prevailing taste of the reading public; with whom, from whatever cause, whether from the habitual hearing of them having

divested them of the charm of novelty, or from any other, pulpit discourses are not a particularly favourite or attractive article:—the *second*—that the form preferred admits more appropriately of sectional subdivisions,—which, in an argumentative discussion, afford the reader suitable pauses for reflection, and contribute, at the same time, to precision and clearness:—and the *third*—that this form admitted of my introducing, in considerable extent and variety, such additional matter as could not, with propriety, have found a place in pulpit addresses to a popular auditory.

On a subject which has been so frequently and so ably discussed, there would be presumption in pretending to have advanced much, if anything at all, of which it can be said—“See, this is new!”—But every writer has his own way of viewing and of bringing out an argument;—and, since there is the same variety of idiosyncrasy among readers as among writers, the placing of it, by this means, in diversified points of light may render it the more distinctly apprehensible, and the more satisfactorily convincing, to differently constituted minds. At all events, new times call for new books; and each author has his own circle of readers.—If I shall be thought to have at all succeeded in placing this argument, in any one of its departments, in a light at all more clear;—if the publication of this volume shall prove the means of enticing to the serious study of it any by whom it would otherwise have been let alone;—

and if by such study, it shall, by God's blessing, in any minds, how few soever, be instrumental in subduing, on the one hand, the high-minded scorn, or dispelling, on the other, the dark distracting doubts and surmises, of scepticism, and of settling such minds in the faith of what, for myself, I more and more firmly believe to be divinely inspired truth, and to be "able to make them wise unto salvation,"—I shall have the satisfaction of not having studied and written in vain.

While infidelity is assiduously active, it would ill become Christians to be apathetic and idle. It is well, that so much has been and is being done, to counteract its efforts.—And among the distinguishing features of our times, in our own country, there is not one that excites a deeper interest, or imparts a livelier satisfaction, than the manifestation, to such an extent, of both mental talent and right-heartedness amongst our working classes; which has been elicited by the instrumentality of that noble Christian Association the "Evangelical Alliance," as well as by other means, both on the subject of infidelity, and on the kindred subject of Sabbath desecration.—For proof, it is only necessary to refer to the Essays on both subjects which have been actually published, and to the large numbers of the competing ones from which they were selected.—And how much too has happily been done in our day, for arresting and turning back the tide of that monstrous system of blinding superstition and spiritual

bondage, Popery; which, while itself perverting and nullifying God's saving truth, has produced a larger amount of infidelity than any other single cause whatever,—unless it be the moral corruption of man's nature: and that, be it remembered, instead of being a single cause, concentrates in itself all causes imaginable.

May God give his countenance and blessing to every means put into operation for promoting the diffusion, the acceptance, and the influence, of TRUTH:—and among the rest, to the present volume, as a tribute to what the Author most sincerely holds to be the first and best of causes! Would that of the cause to which it is devoted it were more worthy!

R. W.

EASTER HOUSE, NEAR GLASGOW,
September 29th, 1852.

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ON MIRACLES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY:—IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT:—GENERAL PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN:—GROUND CLEARED.

OUR principal object in this introductory chapter, as its *heading* implies, will be the clearing of our ground, by the statement and brief elucidation of general principles.

Be it understood, then, first of all, that in the discussion on which I am about to enter, I have no argument with the Atheist. I assume the existence of a God; of a personal, intelligent, independent First Cause; to the *fiat* of whose power the universe owes its origin, and to the perfection of whose wisdom it is indebted for its constitution and its laws;—that constitution, by which all its relations were adjusted,—those laws by which all its movements and all its phenomena are regulated. The very word MIRACLES involves such assumption. Were there no such constitution, and no such laws, and no such Being by whom they were determined,

miracles would be a term without meaning. For, apart altogether from the proof of their reality, miracles, regarded simply in theory, are deviations from that constitution, suspensions of those laws, effected by the power which gave the universe its being, and dictated by the wisdom which arranged and settled its order.—I enter now, therefore, into no consideration of the evidence by which the being of a God is ascertained; into no discussion of the source, or sources, to which our belief in that first and most fundamental of all truths is to be traced; whether to intuition,—to conscience, and the sense of accountableness,—or to rational deduction from existing premises,—from the countless and marvellous indications, namely, of design and skill in extrnal nature. All the three may have their share in the ground of our faith. It is from the last that, in the philosophy of this Book,—the Bible,—the inexcusableness of mankind is inferred, when they fail to discern, in all that they see around them, “the eternal power and Godhead” of the great First Cause.—I assume, then, that there is a God, the creator and upholder of the universe, and the moral governor of all its intelligent inhabitants.

SECTION I.

MAGNITUDE OF THE PRIME QUESTION AT ISSUE.

The great question now before us is—Has this God given us any revelation of his mind and will,

beyond what is derived from nature and from conscience?—and is the Bible such a revelation?—THE BIBLE, all or most of my readers are aware, means simply THE BOOK. We are in possession of a volume, which, by way of eminence, as being the best and most valuable of all books, we so denominate. The propriety of the designation depends on the conclusion to which our present inquiry may conduct us. If indeed this Book *be* from God,—if it *do* contain a revelation to us his creatures of his mind and will;—then must it be supremely worthy of the distinctive eminence assigned to it. We may well call that volume THE BOOK, which is the book OF GOD. As such, it cannot fail to be as superior in excellence to every other, as the mind of God is above the minds of all his creatures; and in value to us, as far above every other, as the interest is deeper, and the importance more commanding, to know what is in that mind, than to know what is in the mind of every intelligent existence besides. As surely as God is entitled to the designation of THE BEING—the “I AM,”—so surely is a revelation from him entitled to the designation of THE BOOK.

This Book, which we thus, by its designation, single out and distinguish above all other books, consists of two great divisions. These, from the periods of time, and the dispensations of religion, during which, respectively, they are alleged to have been given, we denominate the *Jewish* and the *Chris-*

tian revelations;—or, as containing the authentic records of the one and of the other, the *Old* and the *New Testaments*, or *Covenants*.—These two divisions of the Book form one whole. In no argument for their divine authority, it is essential to remark, can they be so separated, as that the claims of the one can be established apart from, and independently of, the claims of the other. Their unity is such, that they necessarily stand or fall together. Some particulars in the evidence, of course, bear more directly and appropriately on the establishment of the one than on that of the other:—but still, such is their connexion,—such their mutual incorporation with each other,—that every proof for one is a proof for both; and whatever should invalidate the claims of the one to a divine origin, would, in the very same degree, affect unfavourably those of the other. We have no wish to absolve ourselves from the obligation of meeting objections against the Old Testament, by alleging that we plead only for the New. We plead for both; and for both alike. No man can be a consistent believer in the New Testament, who repudiates the Old:—nor can any one (we refer, of course, to *Jews*) be a consistent believer in the Old, who refuses to admit the New. The Jewish revelation cannot be proved divine, apart from the Christian:—for without the Christian, its predictions, and promises, and types, would have had no fulfilment; and its grand ultimate design would have failed of being attained. Take

away the New Testament, and the Mosaic Institutes acquire a twofold title to the designation of "beggarly elements;" for, in truth, they not only have no power of salvation in themselves,—no virtue to take away sin, or to renew the heart;—but they become the "elements" of nothing,—of no future disclosures, to show their meaning and their end; and the search in them for the wisdom of "the only wise God," becomes a fruitless task. And, on the other hand, if the divine authority of the New Testament can be satisfactorily established, the proof by which the conclusion is arrived at will be equally valid and decisive for that of the Old. For, from beginning to end, the New bears unceasing reference to the Old; and in many places gives it its most distinct and unqualified attestation. The Old is the introduction to the New:—the New is the development of the Old;—the substance, of which the Old was the shadow;—the recorded fulfilment of what the Old predicted, typified, and promised;—the "perfect day," of which the Old was the obscure and gradual dawn.—In both Old and New, there are recorded miracles; and the great general principles, which, in the first instance, we have to settle, will be subsequently found alike applicable to the one class of wonders, and to the other; though, as you will readily suppose, it will be chiefly to the Christian miracles that our discussions will refer.

From the entire history of the religions which

have existed amongst men independently of revelation, we might demonstrate the need in which the world stood of such an inspired communication from Deity. We might enter into a proof, not in the way of theoretical speculation, but in the only way in which a just conclusion can be educed,—the way which has the sanction of human philosophy in every other department of investigation,—namely by the process of induction,—by an appeal to facts,—of the truth of the Bible position that “the world by wisdom knew not God.” Such facts there are, without number. They extend through the whole period of our world’s existence, and embrace all nations under heaven. If, with so wide and varied a field of facts before them,—if, with the experiment under their eye, made in all imaginable variety of circumstances, some of them the most advantageous for a favourable result, and yet invariably yielding the same conclusion,—men will be either so disingenuous or so inconsistent with themselves, as, while they extol the experimental method of inquiry in every other field, to persist in theorizing in this, we cannot help it. We can only point to the inconsistency, and pray them to look at the facts. What nature without revelation teaches, and what, without revelation, man has learned, are two widely different things:—and widely different things will systems of natural theology be, which are framed from the one and from the other. The philosopher of modern days and of Christian lands reads the lessons

of nature by the aid of another light than was or is possessed by the wise men of antiquity and of heathenism. He reads them by the light—the unacknowledged light—of the Bible: and thus aided, though not owning the aid, he may read them well. With the same advantage, the ancient or the pagan philosopher might have read them, or might now read them, as well,—perhaps even better. But the question is—without this advantage, where, when, and by whom, have they actually been thus read? Even the speculations of the most profound and sagacious have amounted to little more than dim and dubious conjectures. And even as to the nearest approximations to truth, there is no small ground for regarding them as having been either imported from Palestine, or the meagre and mutilated remnants of primitive tradition.

Still,—notwithstanding the fact, that it has thus been by the help of the Bible, direct or indirect, consciously or unconsciously, that such theories of natural theology have been framed,—and notwithstanding the probability thence arising of the Bible being the revelation needed,—of this Book being the very *desideratum* required;—in a case so solemn and momentous, such evidence could not be held as of itself sufficient. We reasonably look for more,—for much more. And more, and much more, we have. In the language of one of the penmen of the Book whose claims are the subject of question, we have “many infallible proofs.” The field, indeed,

is so wide, and the materials so ample, that the difficulty lies, not in finding, but in selecting; not in knowing what to say, but rather what not to say. We have no fear from inquiry. All such fear we hold to be a dishonour to truth, and an indication of the weakness of faith. All truth is consistent. So that, if that which we hold to be true be really so, no future discoveries can ever alter, or ever invalidate it, but must, on the contrary, illustrate and establish it. Our apprehensions are from the want of inquiry. We desire, we court, we urge, investigation. We have no idea of honouring with the name of *faith* anything, be its pretensions what they may, that consists in a blind assent to unexamined truth, on unexamined evidence. An inspired Apostle—if I may be allowed, in the meanwhile, to speak on the assumption of his inspiration)—enjoins believers of the gospel to “be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.” Now, whatever is the reason of our *hope* must be the reason of our *faith*,—for it is in what we believe that our hope has its foundation. So that, if we are *hoping* without reason, it must be because we are *believing* without reason. There is a way which some persons have of distinguishing between reason and faith, in which, as it seems to us, there is neither faith nor reason. They talk of faith, as if it were something quite independent of reason;—something quite above it,—quite transcendental;—something

that rests on no ascertained, defined, *proveable* grounds ;—something, in a word, that begins where reason ends, and with which argument has little or nothing to do.—This is a description of mysticism, of which the tendency is most pernicious, and of which the effects have been most mischievous. We utterly disclaim it. We are quite aware of its source. That source is to be found in a sound Bible doctrine ; the doctrine of the necessity of divine influence to the spiritual discernment and faith of divine truth. But it is on an entirely mistaken apprehension of that doctrine that the mystical notions of which we speak are founded. There is perfect harmony between that doctrine and the position that faith rests on evidence, and *can* rest on nothing else. In this respect, the belief of the Bible being the Word of God differs not in its nature from the belief of any other proposition. In that word itself, indeed, evidence of its own divine authority, of various descriptions, is appealed to. The Spirit of God makes use of that evidence, whether existing in the truth itself or extraneous to it, for working conviction. We call on no man to receive any thing whatsoever as truth, for which satisfactory evidence cannot be produced. No ; nor does, nor can, a righteous God.

SECTION II.

CLASSIFICATION OF EVIDENCES:—TOPIC SELECTED:—REQUISITES TO ITS RIGHT INVESTIGATION.

The evidences of the Bible being a divine revelation,—or, as Paul expresses it, “given by inspiration of God”—are of *three kinds*—the *external*, the *internal*, and the *experimental*:—the *external* being those by which it is *accompanied*; the *internal*, those which *itself contains*; and the *experimental*, those which, by its influence, *itself produces*.—Before entering on our proper subject, which is a branch of the first of these three divisions, we may just give a passing glance at the contents of each. —Under the **FIRST**, then, the **EXTERNAL**,—after the settlement of the canon of Scripture, and of the genuineness and authenticity of its various portions, —are comprised the subjects of *miracles*, *fulfilled prophecy*, *extraneous testimonies*, whether in the remaining writings of profane historians, or (as has in our own day, to so great an extent, been effected) dug from the long-neglected ruins of those cities whose overthrow had here been foretold; every fragment of whose uncovered remains reads a lesson of the authenticity of these sacred records. And to these should be added the *early progress*, and the *continued permanence*, of *Christianity*, considering its own nature, so opposed to every dictate of human pride, and every appetency of human corruption,—the variety and amount of opposition it had to encounter, and

the agency, in itself so thoroughly incompetent, employed in its propagation.—The **SECOND** class—the **INTERNAL**—divides itself into two branches,—*matter* and *manner*:—the former, the *matter*, including the lessons taught respecting the character of the one God;—the perfect and beautiful harmony of the attributes of that character in the grand scheme of human redemption, which it is its leading design to disclose; its lessons of a future state; its precepts of worship and of morals; the consistency between the law and the gospel,—the law, as the test of human actions, convicting men of guilt, and showing the necessity of the gospel,—and then the grace of the gospel supplying effectual motives to love and keep the law;—its superiority, in both doctrine and morality, to all that the unaided reason of man had ever produced. Under each particular, objections are of course supposed to be met and obviated.—And then, under the latter branch, the *manner*, there come, all the various indications of truthfulness, arising from the *style* of the Book; its singularly unaffected simplicity, openness, and honesty;—its candour and impartiality;—the extraordinary suppression, on the part of the writers, even when recording events the most stirring to all their passions, of everything like personal emotion,—a suppression without any apparent effort, and so very *unnatural*, as to be manifestly *supernatural*,—the divine design in it being, to prevent any part of the effect on the mind and heart of the reader from

being put to the account of the power and skill of the writer's rhetoric, or the sympathetic infection of his fervour;—the precision, moreover, and circumstantiality of the narrative;—its apparent inconsistencies, yet real substantial harmony;—and the incidental undesigned coincidences, so numerous, so minute, and so remarkable, between the various portions of the Book, and especially between the historical and the epistolary parts of the New Testament.—And the THIRD class—the EXPERIMENTAL,—consisting in the effects which the principles of the Book, when received by faith, have been known, in a large amount of personal and social experience, to have produced;—effects, such as, when inwardly experienced, are a proof perfectly rational to the believer himself of the divinity of what has caused them,—the divinity of the influence evincing the divinity of the origin,—that which has led him to God being fairly inferred to have come *from* God;—just as the man who takes a prescribed medicine, and immediately experiences in himself the whole series of successive sensations and results previously detailed to him by the physician, has “the witness in himself” to the truth of the physician's testimony:—and effects too, such as, by their outward manifestation, in personal and social character, convey an evidence equally legitimate to those who observe and appreciate them. The recorded and existing changes of character,—not reformations merely, but transformations,—effected by the believing accept-

ance of what this Book teaches,—transformations of the very worst of men to the very best,—of the proudest to the humblest, of the most passionate to the most gentle, of the most profligate to the most consistently moral, of the falsest and most dishonest to the most truthful and upright, of the vilest and most impure to the most spiritual and holy,—are beyond all question:—and, while they evince the divine adaptation of the contents of the Book to the consciousnesses and the felt exigencies of man, they show, at the same time, their inherent divine and living energy,—their self-evidencing character and power.—The fact that such results are not experienced *by all* is no counter-proof whatever; any more than the fact of those who do not take the medicine not experiencing its successive effects—not being the subjects of its healing virtue—is any counter-proof to the experience of those who have put its virtue to the test,—who have tried it, and have been “made whole.”

Thus there is evidence addressed to the *senses* of men; evidence to the *historical observation* of men; evidence to the *experience* of men as to the *tests of human sincerity*; evidence to the *conscience* and to the *felt necessities* of men; and evidence to the *hearts* of men, in the moral and spiritual regeneration which the doctrines of the Book when understood and believed,—consciously to the believer of them himself, and visibly to others,—do so frequently produce.

Some have laid greater stress upon the external evidences, while others have rested chiefly on the internal and the experimental, especially the former. The highly and justly eminent Dr. Chalmers, in the earlier editions of his *Treatise on the Evidences of Christianity*, sets aside the internal altogether,—understood, that is, as founded in the *matter* of revelation,—in man's relations to God, the harmony of the plan of salvation revealed by the gospel with those relations, and the adaptation of that plan to the perfections of the Divine character, and to the natural consciousnesses and the felt exigencies of a sinful, guilty, and accountable creature; regarding these as points beyond the competency of the human judgment.—But in the recent and enlarged edition of that *Treatise*, when his mind had long been the seat of more enlightened and spiritual views of the Gospel,—views, of which his faith had been established by a heart-felt experience of their power, and recommended by a living exemplification of their influence,—this latter branch of the evidence, in connexion with the experimental, holds a prominent place.—It is best, when each description of evidence has its due measure of force assigned to it; and when the harmony of all the three is suitably demonstrated. There is then produced a combination of proof, such as we confidently pronounce unsurpassed in conclusiveness, if even equalled, by any amount of demonstrative evidence adduced in support of any theory, or of any principle or fact, in

the entire range of human science. This idea of the harmony of the different species of proof forms a tempting field; into which, however, we must not now allow ourselves to be enticed.

From the extensive and diversified field thus sketched, we select, for our present consideration, one topic; being the first mentioned under the first of the three great branches of evidence,—the *external*. That topic is, in one word, MIRACLES.—But, though it can be thus stated in a single word, it embraces—as in our progress we may see—no little variety of important and interesting discussion.—Before entering upon it, allow me a remark or two on the state of mind in which all such inquiries ought to be prosecuted:—selecting one or two particulars only from many which suggest themselves.

The first requisite I have to mention is—a *just conception, and corresponding impression, of the importance of the inquiry*.—There is a lightness—a thoughtless indifference—with which by many all such subjects are regarded,—which might astonish us more, were it not so frequent,—and yet of which this very frequency is the most astonishing thing of all. To every mind that is capable of one moment's reflection, and is not, against all persuasion, determined to withhold it, the reflection of that one moment must present the inquiry as one of the most momentarily interesting that can come within the range of conception. What inquiry can be more pregnant with important results, than the inquiry

whether we have in our possession a communication from our Maker, Governor, and Judge:—whether this Book be really a discovery, given by Himself, of the character, the mind, the will, the doings, the purposes, the commands, the prohibitions, the threatenings, and the promises, of the Infinite God:—and of our own relations to Him,—our present condition, our future prospects, and our means of happiness, as intelligent, moral, accountable, and immortal creatures? Surely no man, in possession of a sane mind, can withhold his concurrence with me, when I say, that this is not a question to be treated with carelessness; to be dismissed with the smile of a heartless indifference, or the sneer of a witless buffoonery. The man who should treat such a question thus, how high soever his celebrity for learning or genius, would prove himself emphatically a fool. The question is the very first which any wise and soberly considerate man will be solicitous to have satisfactorily settled. There is, at any rate, one only that can take precedence of it, either in the order of nature or of magnitude,—the question of the divine existence. This, of course, stands first; but this we are now assuming:—and this being assumed, the first after it, beyond dispute and beyond calculation, is this question of revelation. If the Bible be such a revelation, it assures us of an eternal state;—it makes known to us one exclusive way of attaining to happiness in that state, and escaping the misery which it, at the same time, denounces

against us, as the due wages of our sins. Who, then, pretending to the possession of even ordinary prudence, can feel himself, in regard to such a question, equally at ease, on which side soever the scale may preponderate? It is not a matter to be left in dubious suspense. No wise man will rest, till he has pushed it to a settlement. We should summon to it all our wakened and wakeful powers. All frivolity should be banished, as not less impious than it is insensate. The weight of the inquiry should be felt burdening the spirit; and for the removal of the burden, there should be brought to bear upon the investigation the most intense earnestness of the whole soul.

Another important desideratum in the state of mind desirable in our present inquiry, is—*correct conceptions of the different kinds of evidence, and of the particular kind that belongs appropriately to the special branch of that inquiry which is to come before us.*—Of evidence there are, as every one knows, different descriptions;—and few things can be more unreasonable, than to demand on one subject the kind of proof that properly pertains to another. How absurd it would be, to require moral evidence in proof of a problem in geometry;—or to insist on geometrical demonstration in support of a matter of historical fact, a maxim in metaphysical science, or a proposition in ethics or theology! The subject of our present inquiry is a *matter of fact*,—namely, *whether the miracles recorded in the Bible were really*

wrought. And to this matter-of-fact inquiry we should come, not refusing to listen to such proof as may be adduced, because our wayward fancy has set its affection on evidence of a different kind; but, as all right reason dictates, satisfied with its being the description of proof which the nature of the case requires, and of which alone it admits.—Let me further observe, that the question ought not at all to be—What *other* or what *more* proofs, even of the kind which the case admits, might have been adduced?—but simply and solely—Are the proofs actually existing conclusive? We may set our hearts on some special proof;—insist upon having it;—protest that, were it but vouchsafed, we should stand out no longer, but yield immediate assent;—and refuse peremptorily to be satisfied without it:—just as, in the Book whose claims to divinity we have to examine, the Pharisees are alleged to have done,—when, in the midst of signs without number, each one of them conclusive, they persisted in demanding their imaginary “sign from heaven.”—But this is as far as possible from being a wise or fair procedure. The sole inquiries ought to be these two: *What is the existing evidence?* And—*Is this evidence enough?*

SECTION III.

DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH A DIVINE REVELATION MAY BE
MADE:—CREDENTIALS.

In proceeding more directly to our subject—the subject of MIRACLES,—we have still further to clear

our ground.—I have assumed one postulate,—the existence of God. I must assume another; one which I cannot fancy any consistent believer in the first to refuse me. It is this:—that the God whose existence, intelligence, and power have been assumed as satisfactorily proved, must, for the accomplishment of any purpose of his government that may require it, *have access, whenever he wills it, to the minds of his intelligent creatures.* Atheism would at least be more consistent with itself, than the admission of a God, and the denial of this. He is Himself the creator of these minds. He is intuitively and thoroughly acquainted with the generic properties of all, and with the peculiar and distinctive characteristics—the idiosyncrasy—of each.—To question his ability to communicate, and that with indubitable certainty, the thoughts of his own mind to any one of those created and dependent minds,—would be to conceive of Him as destitute of a power which that created and dependent mind itself possesses; and so to place Deity in a position of inferiority to his own creature! We cannot insult our reader's understanding, by dwelling on such a supposition. The idea, that the Almighty Creator should have made minds, which, when made, are beyond his own reach, and incapable of having any certain communication from himself imparted to them,—is so outrageously foolish and self-contradictory,—that no folly could well surpass that of entertaining it, unless it might be the folly of set-

ting about any serious attempt at its exposure and refutation.

The possibility, then, being assumed, of God's imparting his mind to men;—there are *two ways* in which this might be done:—

1st, He might make the communication *to every individual mind directly and for itself*. In such a case, it is mere trifling for us to allege, that we are incapable of forming any clear conception of the manner in which the undoubting certainty can be imparted of such a communication coming from God. What of that? All that we need to be assured of is, what we have just been assuming as self-evident,—namely, that Deity has not created minds with which He is precluded from holding intercourse,—or which he has reserved to himself no means of making sure whether any thing he may desire to communicate to them is really from Him. The *power of God to do* is one thing; the *mode of his doing*, quite another. We may give the most unhesitating credit to the one, although we feel ourselves quite incompetent to comprehend the other,—as being altogether out of the range of our own experience.

Or—2dly, He might impart the discovery of truth *to one or a few minds*; and make them *the medium of its conveyance to others*.—Now, supposing this latter course to be the one adopted, the reader will at once perceive that there is something more required, which was not necessary on the former

supposition. It is this—that he empower the individuals thus selected to produce to their fellow-men *satisfactory credentials* of their speaking with his authority;—in other words, *sufficient evidence* of their having a commission from him, and of the consequent divine origin, and divine claim to acceptance and faith, of the message they deliver.

Thus, then, stands the case. It is our belief, that God has given to mankind a revelation of his will;—and that the latter of these two methods of imparting it is the one, which, in his unerring wisdom, he has preferred:—that He has communicated his message, supernaturally and infallibly, to some; and has made them the instruments of imparting it, in his name and by his authority, to others,—to their brethren of mankind at large;—enabling them, at the same time, to present palpable and unquestionable credentials of their commission.

Of such credentials MIRACLES are the most natural that could well be thought of. Being addressed to men's senses, they are such as all can witness, and such as all are competent to judge of:—and, being works quite above the range of all human or created power,—works such as “no man can do except God be with him,” they are adequate testimonials of the authority in support of which they are wrought being *divine*.—PROPHECY is usually, and with propriety and advantage, treated as a distinct branch of evidence from miracles. And yet in one view, and a sufficiently obvious one, it is not distinct, but

the same. Prophecy is a branch of the miraculous. Every prophecy is a miracle. It is a MIRACLE OF KNOWLEDGE, as really as the raising of the dead to life is a MIRACLE OF POWER. To the prophet, whose predictions are fulfilled, we might say—"We know that thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can *know these things which thou knowest*, except God be with him;" on the very same principle, and with the very same assurance of truth, as we should say to him by whom miraculous works were effected—"We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can *do those things which thou doest*, except God be with him." The only difference between the two miracles resolves itself into the distinction between *knowledge* and *power*. If there be any other, it is merely the trivial one of *time*. In the case of prophecy, or the miracle of knowledge, there is a longer interval ere the evidence can be completed; the events requiring to be witnessed, by which the correctness of the knowledge is ascertained. This, however, is very immaterial, in regard to the proper *nature* of the proof. For, having said that every prophecy is a miracle, I have now further to say, that every miracle is a prophecy. The prophecy is a MIRACLE OF KNOWLEDGE;—the miracle is a PROPHECY OF POWER. The power by which the miracle is wrought—(as may be noticed more particularly by and by)—being *divine* power,—not transferred to the human messenger, but remaining God's, and God's alone, and being by God

alone directly put forth for its effectuation,—it is plain, that a miracle, as far as the messenger is concerned whose commission and whose testimony are to be certified, is simply an intimation of such divine power being about to be put forth by Him who alone possesses it, to produce an effect which He alone is able to accomplish. And, to make this still more manifest:—if we only suppose that the production of the miraculous effect is not immediate,—not to take place at the moment of its intimation, but fixed in the messenger's announcement for a precise time in the somewhat distant future;—in that case, when the time came, and the power was put forth, and the miracle wrought accordingly,—we should have, you will at once perceive, a *miracle* and a *fulfilled prophecy* in the same event;—we should have, in that one event, the evidence of the miracle of knowledge and the miracle of power united.

You will observe, that I have limited the working of miracles to the agency of power that is strictly and properly *divine*.—With regard to the powers of created beings, superior to man, though still, as every creature must be, infinitely inferior to God,—from whose existence attempts have by some been made to throw discredit and sceptical doubt on the evidence of miracles;—we shall have occasion to speak of it hereafter; when we shall endeavour to demonstrate two positions:—the first, that there can be no such thing;—and the second, that if there

could, it would make no essential difference in the nature and conclusiveness of the proof.

SECTION IV.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Various definitions have, by different writers, been given of a miracle; some of them more, and some of them less, explicit and correct,—but all of them, substantially, much the same. The definition given of them by the Hebrew Ruler Nicodemus, when he came to Jesus by night (John iii. 1, 2.) as “*works which no man can do, except God be with him,*”—is quite sufficiently accurate and comprehensive for our purpose. I have already, at the very outset, given a definition of them in other terms—as *works, involving a temporary suspension of the known laws of nature, or a deviation from the established constitution and fixed order of the universe;*—or, perhaps more correctly, of that department of the universe which constitutes *our own system*,—whose established order and laws we are capable, to the full extent requisite for the purpose, of accurately ascertaining:—works, therefore, which can be effected by no power short of that which gave the universe its being, and its constitution and laws. In this definition, let it be observed, I have called a miracle a suspension of the *known* laws of nature. It is necessary to mark this. Effects, it is abundantly obvious, might be produced, such as, to those who

witnessed them, might appear, and might be believed, miraculous,—while the persons by whom they are performed are well aware, from their superior acquaintance with the laws, and powers, and phenomena of nature, that the appearance is fallacious, and the belief unfounded. The persons before whom they are performed may be utterly unable to account for them by any natural laws or powers *known to them*:—while, in point of fact, in place of their being suspensions of any law or laws of nature whatsoever, they are actually the product of their operation; so that, in the circumstances, the real miracle would have lain, not in their production, but in their *non*-production. *That* would have been the true deviation from the settled constitution of nature.—In such a case, the miracle is a miracle *only to ignorance*; that is, it is *no* miracle. A little further development of the secrets of nature annihilates the seemingly miraculous, and only reads to the previously uninformed mind a new lesson of nature's uniformity.—It becomes, therefore, an indispensable requisite to a genuine miracle, that it be wrought both *on* materials, and *by* materials, of which the properties are well and familiarly known;—respecting which, that is, the common course of nature is fully understood.—This idea has been felicitously put by the late Bishop Gleig;—"Were a physician," says he, "instantly to give sight to a blind man, by anointing his eyes with a chemical preparation, to the nature and properties of which

we were absolute strangers, the cure would to us undoubtedly be *wonderful*:—but we would not pronounce it *miraculous*, because it might be the physical effect of the operation of the unguent upon the eye. But were he to give sight to the patient merely by commanding him to receive it, or by anointing his eyes with spittle,—we should, with the utmost confidence, pronounce the cure to be miracle; because we know perfectly, that neither the human voice, nor human spittle, has, by the established constitution of things, any such power over the diseases of the eye.—No one is ignorant, that persons apparently dead are frequently restored to their families and friends, by being treated, during suspended animation, in the manner recommended by the Humane society. To the vulgar, and sometimes even to men of science, these resuscitations appear very wonderful;—but, as they are known to be effected by physical agency, they cannot be considered as miraculous deviations from the laws of nature. On the other hand, no one could doubt of his having witnessed a real miracle, who had seen a person that had lain four days dead, come alive out of the grave at the word of another; or who had even beheld a person who exhibited all the common evidences of death instantly resuscitated merely by being desired to rise.”

This is simple and clear. Would that all that has been written on the subject were equally so! In every argument, without doubt, it is a first and

most essential requisite, that our conceptions be as distinct and definite as possible of what we are arguing about;—what *to*, and what *from*;—of the object to which our conclusion points, and of the premises from which it is drawn.—In the present instance, for example, the importance is not to be questioned of our having some right understanding of *what a miracle is*,—of *what constitutes* any act, or any event, *miraculous*. Yet on this very point there has, I cannot but think, been an amount of refining and distinguishing, such as is fitted to perplex and bewilder simple minds; minds, whose very simplicity (understanding it in a good sense) may be one of their best qualifications for forming a correct judgment. I have just repeated my definition of a miracle.—Now surely the case last mentioned by the Bishop comes fully up to that definition:—there being nothing more thoroughly ascertained as a law of the human nature, in its present state, fixed by the will of its Creator and Governor, than that, when a man is once really dead, no voice on earth, no power on earth, no means on earth, can bring him back to life. I can see no impropriety in pronouncing this, not only *out of* the course of nature, but even *contrary to* it,—*against* it. Now here it is that we have our *refinings* and *distinguishings*. An able modern writer on miracles* thus expresses himself:—“That language, however, commonly in use, is yet wholly

* Trench.

unsatisfactory, which speaks of these wonderful works of God as *violations* of a natural law. *Beyond* nature,—*beyond*, and *above* the nature that we know, they are; but not contrary to it.* He grants miracles to be *beyond*, *above*, *beside* nature; but denies their being *against*, or *contrary to*, or *violations of*, any of nature's laws. How does he maintain this distinction? On two grounds.

1. "The miracle is not thus unnatural, nor can it be; since the unnatural, the contrary to order, is of itself the ungodly, and can in no way, therefore, be affirmed of a divine work, such as that with which we have to do. The very idea of the world, as more than one name which it bears testifies, is that of order:—that which comes in, then, to enable it to realize this idea which it has lost, will scarcely itself be a disorder."—Now, if by a "*disorder*" were meant a deviation from the principles or laws of the *moral* universe, I could readily understand the application of the term "*ungodly*" to that:—but how such a term can be applicable to a deviation from the established laws, or order, of the *physical* universe,—and that too for the effectuation of a godly purpose,—I am at a loss to imagine. Call it a "*disorder*," if you will—(it is not worth while to dispute about a word)—the term in such a connexion, can mean nothing more than a *deviation from fixed order* in the physical system;—and I am still unable

* Notes on the Miracles of our Lord—2d Edit. pp. 14, 15.

to conceive how a disorder, in this sense, in the inferior department of God's creation, with the view of effecting the restoration of order in the superior,—the superior by infinite degrees,—can “of itself be the ungodly.”—But there is a second ground, though closely connected with the first:—

2. “So far from this,” he adds, “the true miracle is a higher and purer nature, coming down out of the world of untroubled harmonies into this world of ours, which so many discords have jarred and disturbed, and bringing this back again, though it be but for one prophetic moment, into harmony with that higher.”—Now, in this representation of the case, the writer rises to a higher sphere of nature, and embraces a wider range of nature, than that which pertains to our present system, and comes under our cognizance. But in this he seems to me, in the first place, to forget the terms of his own definition of miracles,—as being “beyond and above *the nature which we know*, but not contrary to it.” He forgets this:—for if he is to be allowed to comprehend under the term *nature* a higher and a wider sphere of nature than “*the nature which we know*,”—then will it necessarily follow, not only that miracles are not *against* nature, or *contrary* to nature, which he denies them to be,—but that neither are they *beyond* nature, nor *above* nature, which he admits and asserts them to be. And on the same principle, when he says—“But while the miracle *is not thus nature*, neither is it *against* nature,”—he states what is not

true. Taking in the "higher and purer nature" of which he speaks, the miracle "*is nature*,"—nature in its highest and best estate.—"The healing of the sick can in no way be termed against nature," he says, "seeing that the sickness which was healed was against the true nature of man—that it is sickness which is abnormal, and not health. The healing is the restoration of the primitive order."—But who does not see, that this is quite beside the mark? The healing of the sick—the restoration of the sick man to health,—is not the miracle. The miracle lies in *the means by which the healing and restoration are effected*. The sole question is—Does it follow, that, because "the healing of the sick is the restoration of the primitive order," there is nothing "against nature,"—that is, against the ordinary operation of the laws of nature in the physical economy of our world,—in a sick man's being in an instant restored to perfect soundness *by the utterance of a word*?—nothing in violation of, or contrary to, a natural law in "the restoration of the primitive order" *by such a means*?—If we are at liberty to widen and elevate *ad libitum* the acceptation of the word *nature*, why may we not at once embrace in it the power itself of Deity? and then, seeing it is perfectly *in nature* that omnipotence should work wonders,—it will follow of course, that there is nothing against nature, or beyond nature, or above nature, or beside nature, in the very greatest and most marvellous of these wonders;—nay, no-

thing really marvellous in them. All miracles become in this way perfectly natural; the miraculous, indeed, entirely ceases.

The truth is, we must understand the term *nature* in the sense usually attached to it,—as relating to the constitution and laws of the physical system of our own globe. It is true, that, in consequence of sin, there have been “jarrings and disturbances” of its “primitive order.” But it does not follow from that, that there are no natural principles and laws in fixed and constant operation. And when an event occurs for which these natural principles and laws make no provision,—for which they can in no way account,—which is quite aside from, and at variance with, their ordinary uniform operation,—it does not to me seem very material, whether we speak of it as beyond nature, or above nature, or beside nature, or against nature, or contrary to nature,—whether as a suspension, an interruption, a contravention, or a violation of nature’s laws;—provided we are understanding “nature and nature’s laws” as having reference to the physical economy of our own system.—When, in illustration of his position that a miracle is not at all “the infraction of a law, but only a lower law neutralized and put out of working by a superior,” Mr. Trench says—“Continually we behold, in the world around us, lower laws held in restraint by higher, mechanic by dynamic, chemical by vital, physical by moral; yet we say not, when the lower thus gives place in favour of the higher,

that there was any violation of law,—that anything contrary to nature came to pass;—rather we acknowledge the law of a greater freedom swallowing up the law of a lesser;”—he seems to forget, that this “holding in restraint of one law by the operation of another” is itself *one of the very laws* whose working “we behold in the world around us;” and that it comes, therefore, among the laws of nature as ordinarily understood,—that is, as having relation to this said “world around us”—to the physical order of our system. But it is manifestly unfair, in interpreting *nature*, to quit our own system,—to mount to a loftier sphere, to take in a wider amplitude, to embrace the entire range of being; and then, because a thing, though a manifest contravention of the laws of “the world around us”—of “the nature which we know,”—may not be out of harmony with nature when considered as embracing the boundless universe, and even the attributes of its maker, thus bringing omnipotence itself into the range of “natural causes,”—to deny the propriety of pronouncing anything whatever to be *against nature*. For this involves the fallacy of taking the same term in two senses; and, because the thing in question may not be inconsistent with it in the one, concluding that it cannot be inconsistent with it in the other!

To this last observation I am more especially led by the similarity of the ground taken up by the able editor of “Voices of the Church in reply to

Strauss.*—"A miracle, then," he says, "is not a contravention of the laws of nature. There is no force—no compulsion. *Simply, a new antecedent comes into action, and a new consequent necessarily ensues.* The operation, instead of being opposed to, is in strict harmony with, pre-existing laws. The cause is precisely adapted to the condition of the thing to be operated on, and to the desired effect. It is but a change of key in the grand chorus of nature; and *there is the hand of the divine musician ready to take the needful means for producing the change which He wills.* A ball struck by a projectile force goes straight forward. If a similar impulse is made to act at right angles with the first force, the ball takes the diagonal of the parallelogram. Is the second power a violation of any law? Yet it changes the result. *Thus the mind of Deity wills an unusual effect, and a corresponding change ensues.* The multiform changes which the science of chemistry offers, may afford similar illustrations. White becomes black, sweet becomes bitter, a noxious becomes a wholesome beverage, by the smallest changes in the antecedents; and each antecedent produces its own effect. *Is the mind of Deity the only power in the universe, which cannot, of its own free motion, and by its own resources, produce alterations in created things?*"†—Now the abstract truth of such state-

* The Rev. Dr. J. R. Beard.

† Strauss, Hegel, and their opinions—by the Rev. J. R. Beard—p. 35.—The *Italics* are mine.

ments who would think of questioning? My objection to them is—not that in themselves they are untrue, but that they are not relevant to the case in hand;—in other words, that *they destroy the possibility of miracle altogether*. A glance at the sentences, or portions of sentences, which I have put in *Italics*, will at once show what I mean. If among *causal antecedents* we give a place to “the mind of Deity”—the “will” of Deity—“the hand of the great musician in the grand chorus of nature,”—the necessary sequence seems to be, that there never can be *any thing miraculous*; omnipotence being, of course, quite an adequate cause for everything imaginable that does not involve a contradiction. If *nature* is to be understood as comprehending *Deity*;—if among the laws of nature is to be reckoned the ability of Deity to effect whatever he wills,—then no doubt it follows, that nothing can be out of harmony with the laws of nature that is possible to omnipotence. But is this at all the sense in which the designation “*the laws of nature*” is ever used? Is it not invariably and systematically employed to denote the order originally assigned to the movements of the physical universe,—the settled principles, according to which the reciprocal action and reaction of the endlessly diversified forces and influences of the system of creation around us were to be regulated? Is it not these settled principles that properly constitute what we are accustomed to call *natural causes*? And is it not the

very interference of divine power, to contravene the ordinary and stated operation of these principles or causes, that constitutes what we denominate *miracle*? But, if the intervention of this divine power is itself to be reckoned among the natural causes, what becomes of the *miraculous*?—all is then *natural*:—the distinction between *nature* and *miracle* is gone. The truth is, that in this representation, as in the former, the error (for though abstractly true, we hold it an error in the present argument) arises from the arbitrary use of the terms *nature*, *laws of nature*, and *natural*, in a higher and more comprehensive sense than that which is legitimate, or sanctioned by ordinary usage.—“A ball struck by a projectile force goes straight forward. If a similar impulse is made to act at right angles to the first force, the ball takes the diagonal of the parallelogram. Is the second power a violation of any law? Yet it changes the result.” “A *violation* of any law?” Certainly not. The second result is as much the *fulfilment* of a law as the first. But suppose, when the ball received the second impulse, divine power were to interfere, and, instead of taking the diagonal of the parallelogram, it were, in contravention of both the first and the second law, to turn directly backward to whence it came:—suppose this;—and suppose the same question put—“Is this *third* power, which again changes the result, a violation of any law?” According to the hypothesis under discussion, the answer ought still

to be *No* :—it is only the “coming into action of a new antecedent”—the volition and the power of Deity :—and this is as much *in nature*, and the operation of a *natural cause*, as either of the other two. The “new consequent necessarily ensues,” on the “new antecedent coming into action :”—and “is the mind of Deity the only power in the universe, which cannot, of its own free motion, and by its own resources, produce alterations on created things?” It is quite as *natural*, then, that the ball should follow the direction of the impulse of the divine power, as that it should follow the direction of either of the previous impulses, or of the intermediate one from the combination of the two.—The common sense of mankind revolts from such a representation. And the classing of divine power, in such a way, along with natural causes can serve no purpose but that of bewildering simple minds. The power of God is not a power *of* nature, or *in* nature :—it is a power altogether *above* and *independent of* nature. *Nature* is God’s constitution of his own universe :—and the *laws of nature* are the divinely ordained rules of that constitution :—and when, in a case such as that just supposed, divine power interferes, and produces an effect at variance with the ordinary operation of any of those laws, such interference is not the operation of *another natural law* ; it is that power which is *above* nature showing itself to be a power *over* nature, and capable of counterworking any of those laws at the plea-

sure of its divine possessor, when any divine end requires it.

I cannot but think, that my friend Dr. Vaughan, in his highly valuable work entitled "The Age and Christianity,"—a work characterised by sound principle and logical discrimination and precision,—has fallen, on this subject, into a similar needless refinement,—needless, and therefore perplexing. "By a miracle, then," he writes, "we do not understand even a suspension, much less a violation, of natural laws, but simply such a control of natural causes, as bespeaks the intervention of a cause to which they are all secondary and obedient. The old relations of cause and effect remain strictly as they were; but a new power has come in, capable of giving a particular direction to natural causes, so that a particular event follows :—and, as no one can doubt the power of the divine Being so to interpose himself, if we suppose him to exist, the whole question, whether there may be miracles or not, resolves itself into another, viz.—whether there may be a God or not?"* —The closing sentiment of this extract has my hearty concurrence. But I cannot so readily acquiesce in his refusing to a miracle any thing that amounts to a violation, or even a suspension of any natural laws. Either that "cause" to which "all others are secondary and obedient" is the power of God; in which case, all that has been said against the propriety of ranking it among natural causes,

* Page 91.

applies here:—or the ground on which he rests the refusal is—the possible existence of natural laws that are beyond our cognizance,—of causes, even of a secondary kind, of whose operation we are ignorant. But do not we give the adversary an advantage, when, in meeting an objection which is by him based on what we actually *know to be*, we betake ourselves to a ground, for which all that we can say is, that, for aught we can tell, it *possibly may be*? Do we not leave him some little reason to smile, and say—“We make you welcome to your region of imaginary possibilities: we prefer, for our parts, that of ascertained realities?”—“Suppose,” says Dr. Vaughan, “it could be shown that a miracle is simply a natural effect, following from some special relation given to purely natural causes. Would not a miracle, in this case, cease to be a ‘contradiction’ in the sense asserted, and so cease to be an impossibility?”* Well:—but, suppose this cannot be shown. Dr. Vaughan does not affirm that it can be shown;—he only says this is “conceivable.” Are not we, then, basing our argument on a *hypothesis*, while our adversary is basing his on a *fact*?—and are we, in this, doing our cause justice? It is, I grant, ground on which no man can meet us;—but is it ground on which any man is under obligation to meet us? I cannot but deem it, I repeat, much more desirable, in an argument like the

* Page 90.

present, to keep to such natural laws and second causes as have been ascertained to exist and operate ; and not to go for them into the region of the unknown and the "conceivable." Dr. Vaughan gives the following illustration :—"Suppose sight to be given to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and even life to the dead :—it is here to be remembered, that, as there are natural causes which produce blindness, and deafness, and death,—so there are natural causes which give sight, and hearing, and life. Hence a miracle may be no more than the putting of one set of these causes into action in place of another."*—Now, let us just take the last of the cases supposed, as being one of which we have already made use, and one that sets the position I am disposed to take in a distinct light. There are, says Dr. Vaughan, "natural causes which give—life." What !—it may fairly be asked—natural causes for restoring real life to the really dead ! What provision in nature has ever been discovered for the production of such a result ?—has it ever been exemplified ?—has there ever been the most distant approximation to it ? We know that there have been remarkable cases of the recovery of persons in a state of suspended animation. We know that by the action of galvanism on the nervous system, the physical movements of life can be produced even on the really dead frame. But if there be any one thing regarding the consti-

* Ibid.

tution of man, which universal experience has settled as a law,—settled as the established course of nature,—it is that, once really dead, there are no natural causes by whose operation life can be restored. In such a case, then, is it, on any principle of legitimate reasoning, justifiable, to quit the province of reality, and take in that of hypothesis? When to not a single fact can we point in the natural course of things, nor to a single successful experiment in the history of mankind, from the time that “death entered into the world” till now,—ought we to satisfy ourselves with a—“*Suppose?*” Or can we reasonably expect an opponent to be satisfied with it? Is it not better for us, to consider what a miracle *is*, than what a miracle *may be*? If it is a suspension, or violation of the *known* laws of nature, is there any good end gained by supposing the operation of such as are *unknown*? If a man has lain four days in the grave, after having presented all the symptoms of dissolution ere he was laid in it,—all the known laws of nature—all the second causes whose operation has ever been observed—concur in assuring us that in none of them is there anything to which we can look for the restoration of life;—in other words, that there is nothing by which life can be restored but the immediate intervention of the power that gave it.—And is this discussion, after all, much more than a logomachy? What material difference is there between the immediate intervention of a power that suspends, or contravenes, the known

laws of nature, and the intervention of a power that “puts into force at its bidding natural causes” that are unknown? In point of evidential effect, these are surely very much the same. But the former has the advantage (and it is not small) of leaving no gap to be filled up by the imagination, and no room for the sceptical adversary to say—You have no right to proceed on suppositions.

These observations relate to the nature of a miracle regarded simply *in itself*,—or in reply to the inquiry *What is it?*—In regard to the further question, of the *power* necessary to its effectuation, from which some have thought it preferable to frame their definition of a miracle,—I have already intimated my agreement with Nicodemus, that it is a work “which no man can do except God be with him.” My conviction is, that no real miracle ever has been, or ever can be, wrought in attestation of aught but truth; and that no real miracle ever has been, or ever can be, wrought by the intervention of any power but that of God. Of the powers of superhuman agents,—agents, in the scale of creation, between man and God,—of which so much has by some writers been made in the discussion of this question,—and of the needless and undesirable complexity which has thus been introduced into it;—we shall have, as already hinted, occasion to say a little hereafter.

SECTION V.

DIRECTNESS OF THE PROOF FROM MIRACLES:—WHAT THEY ATTEST:—IF WROUGHT, CERTAINTY OF THEIR ATTESTATION.

When such miracles are wrought in connexion with any commission professedly received from God, or with any testimony alleged to have his authority, there cannot, with any ingenuous mind, be the slightest difficulty in discerning the relation between the one and the other,—or the nature of the evidence borne by the miracle to the commission or the testimony. Every such mind will be ready, with Nicodemus, to say, regarding him in support of whose commission, or of whose testimony, they are wrought—“We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.” In every such case, it requires but the capacity of a child to see, they are the direct and unequivocal seal of Heaven to the commission, or to the testimony, of him who possesses the seal and can thus show its impress.—I can imagine nothing more perverse, or more futile, than to put such a question as—*What connexion can there be between any fact whatever and the truth of a doctrine?*—In one sense, it may at once be granted, there is and can be none. Truth, considered abstractly, *does not at all depend upon evidence.* If a proposition be true, it has the attribute of truth in itself, independently of all evidence.

Evidence, every one must see, does not *make it true* ;—it only *shows it to be true* :—and shows it to be true only to those who before were ignorant of its truth. And in this view, the connexion of the evidence with the truth is much too simple to be capable of being perverted by any sophistry. If a man announces himself, as having been commissioned by God to propound a certain doctrine, or system of doctrines, *as from Him* ;—and, for the truth of his commission and his communication, appeals to works such as no power but that of God can effect :—if, upon his making this appeal, these works are instantly and openly done at his bidding ;—there is no evading of the conclusion, that this is *a divine interposition*, at the moment, in attestation of the authority he claims ; and of the truth of what is declared. The professed divine ambassador says—“ *This is from God* ; ”—and God, by the instant intervention of the miracle, sets his seal to it,—says, as by a voice from heaven, if not even more decisively—“ *It is from me !* ”—The sole questions requiring to be answered, in order to the legitimacy of the conclusion, are these two :—“ *Is the work one which God alone can do ?* ”—and—“ *Is it actually done ?* ” If these questions are settled in the affirmative,—there is no reasonable ground on which the conclusion can be withstood.

You will further have observed, that I have represented miracles as attesting the one or the other of two things ;—either a divine commission in general, or the truth of any particular article in the

communication made. It is in the former of these two lights that the words of Nicodemus present them : as evidences of *commission* ;—"We know that thou art a teacher come from God." And in the same light our Lord himself, on various occasions, appeals to them ; "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do *bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.*"—On the other hand, when Jesus said to the Jews—"But that ye may know that *the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,*"—and then, as a proof of this particular fact or truth, commanded the paralytic to "rise, take up his bed and walk,"—we have an exemplification of the *second* of the two lights in which we have said miracles may be regarded :—the miracle having been wrought in immediate connexion with that one position, was the direct divine attestation of its truth.

Another observation still requires to be made,—made, that is, more pointedly, for it has already been alluded to ;—I mean that in the working of a miracle, there is, in every case, a *direct and immediate interference of Deity*. There is no transference of power from God to the divinely commissioned messenger. Neither is there any committing of divine omnipotence to his discretion. The former is, in the nature of the thing, impossible. It would be making the creature for the time almighty :—and that—(since omnipotence can belong to none but divinity)—would be equivalent to making him

God. And the latter, were it at all imaginable, would neutralize and nullify the evidence:—in as much as it would render necessary to its validity a previous assurance of the *impeccability* of the person to whom the trust was committed; that is, an assurance, and an absolute one, of the impossibility of its being ever perverted, by the improper application of the power, to purposes foreign to those of his commission. Omnipotence placed at a creature's discretion, is indeed as real an impossibility in the divine administration, as the endowing of a creature with the attribute itself:—for, in truth, if the power remains with God, it would amount to the very same thing as God's subjecting himself to his creature's arbitrary and capricious will.—There is, strictly speaking, in any miracle, no agency but that of the divine Being himself. Even to speak of the messenger as his *instrument*, is not correct. All that the messenger does, is—to declare his message; to appeal to God for its truth:—and if, at his word, intimating a miracle as about to be performed in proof of it, the miracle actually takes place;—there is, on his part, in regard to the performance, neither agency nor instrumentality; unless the mere utterance of words, in intimation of what is about to be done, or in appeal to Heaven and petition for its being done, may be so called. God himself is the agent,—the sole and immediate agent. And there is, in connexion with the miracle of power, a miracle of knowledge; consisting in such a secret super-

natural communication between the mind of God and the mind of his servant, as imparts to the latter the perfect assurance that God *will*, at the moment, put forth the necessary power ;—that he certainly *will* strike in with his miraculous attestation. Failing this, the professed divine messenger must be set down as an impostor, and his alleged message given to the winds ;—if, indeed, for his impiety and presumption, the Divine Being, whom, if he could, he would have made a liar, does not, in jealousy for the glory of his name, strike in in another way, and, instead of miraculously attesting the divinity of the message, execute supernatural and summary vengeance on the messenger.

It may, then, we presume, be considered as admitted, that on the supposition of miracles—“works which no man can do unless God be with him”—being *bonâ fide* wrought,—they do constitute a satisfactory evidence,—an evidence which there is no rebutting,—of a commission or a testimony being from God.—One of the most eminent of the opposers of the divinity of the Bible in our own country, to whose reasonings we shall have occasion, by and by, very specially to advert,—the celebrated historian and philosopher, *David Hume*,—never makes this a question. He denies that real miracles ever have been wrought ;—we shall see on what ground :—but he never at all disputes the point that, if actually wrought, they would have been conclusive proofs of divine authority. And, in spite of a little

occasional sceptical speculation, on the part of some whose deism makes a near approach to atheism, such is the general and reasonable belief. — The grand inquiry is—*Have they been wrought?*—which amounts to the same thing with—*Have we by whom they have not been witnessed, sufficient evidence on which to found our conviction of their having been wrought?* It is evident, that we can have no solid ground for our faith of the attested doctrines, unless we have sufficient ground for our faith in the miracles by which their attestation is alleged to have been given.

CHAPTER II.

POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES:—PROBABILITY OF MIRACLES:— OPENING OF ARGUMENT ON THEIR CERTAINTY.

HAVING, in the preceding chapter, endeavoured, as far as seemed necessary, to clear our way by preparatory observations,—we now go forward to a more direct grappling with our argument.—And, for the sake at once of clearness and continuity, we shall arrange the materials of our discussion of it under three Heads—The POSSIBILITY of miracles—the PROBABILITY of miracles—and the CERTAINTY of miracles.—The first and the second of these may appear to the reader as only a further clearing of our way. And so, we admit, they are. Without the third, they would amount to nothing. But they are somewhat more than merely preparatory. They are portions of our process of argument:—links in our chain.—The last Head of the three, however, is of course the chief; and will require to be illustrated, and reasoned out, with much more enlargement than either of the others.

SECTION I.

THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES.

It cannot, surely, be needful that on this particular I should dwell at any length. I have formerly said, that I assume the existence of a God,—a personal intelligence, the Creator, Upholder, and Governor of the universe. On the question of *possibility*, this should be enough. For in truth, to deny the possibility of miracles, is atheism. In other words, atheism would be more self-consistent than the admission of a God, and the denial of such possibility:—creation itself—or the bringing of all things into being out of nothing—being an incomparably greater wonder, than any which ever afterwards, in the history of our own or of any other world, could, for any divine end, be required to be done. Let the nature and amount of the exigency be imagined ever so great, or supposed to transcend imagination altogether, no power could ever be needed to meet it greater than that which had been put forth in *creation*. If we admit creation, we cannot for a moment hesitate about admitting the great Bible truth, that “with God all things are possible.”—“Spinoza,” says the late eminent Richard Watson, “denies that any power can supersede that of nature; or that any thing can disturb or interrupt the order of things:—and accordingly he defines a miracle to be ‘a rare event, happening according to some laws

that are unknown to us.' But, if the facts themselves which have been commonly called miraculous are admitted to have taken place, this method of accounting for them is obviously most absurd; inasmuch as it supposes that those unknown laws *chance* to come into operation, just when men professing to be endued with miraculous powers wished them,—whilst yet such laws were to them unknown."* The absurdity, thus stated by this acute reasoner, must at once come home to the reader's convictions. We do not at all wonder that such a man as Spinoza should have denied the possibility of miracles. With his views on the antecedent question of theism it was consistent. For his theism (if theism it ought at all to be called) was a kind of identification of God with nature and nature with God, such as that God, instead of being the author of nature, was himself incorporated with and immanent in it;—not its maker, preserver, and ruler, but one with it:—a system, by which the proper personality of Deity was set aside, and which really amounted to a species of *pantheism*:—and that, when analysed, amounts, in effect though not in name, to *atheism*.—But for any one to deny the possibility of miracles who, instead of resting satisfied with the mystic power of what Spinoza calls *nature*, believes that there is a *God*, such a personal intelligence as we have described,—is indeed a most

* Inst. vol. i. p. 77.

unaccountable anomaly,—a palpable self-contradiction. If to the power of such a Being the universe owes its existence, and to his wisdom and skill its order, constitution, and laws;—then to grant this, and yet question the possibility that, for any important end in the view of this divine Being, any temporary change could ever be introduced, is, we repeat, a grosser inconsistency than the denial of the being of a God altogether. Such an end—such a purpose—we may hereafter see, might form as essential a part of the divine plans,—of the great original scheme of the divine administration,—as the laws of the physical world themselves:—but what we have to do with at present, is simply the contradiction involved in the admission of a God, and questioning the possibility of his interfering with his own works;—granting Him the power of *creation*, and denying him the power of *change*. To the will of the Almighty Maker and Ruler everything in the universe must, of necessity, be entirely and unceasingly subject. He who arranged its constitution, and prescribed its laws, must have it ever in his power to alter, to modify, to suspend, and to counteract, at his pleasure. He who created, can even, if he will, annihilate. Creation—in the very idea of it—supposes that what now is once was not. There can therefore be no contradiction in supposing what once was not to cease to be. All depends, and must depend, on the supreme will. He who commanded *into* being can surely command *out* of

being. By no consistent theist can it be questioned, that He who "spake and it was done" can, by one word of his power,—nay by one unuttered volition—bring to nothing all that exists but Himself.

The habitual use, we may here remark, of a particular phraseology operates, many a time, with a very illusive effect upon the mind. Thus we are accustomed to hear NATURE spoken of in such a way, and with so much familiarity and frequency, that we are apt to fancy it some distinct and independent subsistence,—some mysterious controlling agency; almost, like Spinoza, to confound it with divinity. And what are called *the laws of nature* we are prone to think of as some kind of *powers*;—and of powers too, operating according to an uncontrolled and uncontrollable necessity. We require to beware of this deceptive influence of terms; to school our minds carefully into freedom from it. For, what is NATURE? "An imaginary being supposed to preside over the material and animal world?"—(the first signification assigned to the word by our great Lexicographer, and thus showing the very danger of which we now speak.) Not at all; but that material and animal world itself, with the order and constitution settled for it by the power and the wisdom which gave it being.—And what are *the laws of nature*? Powers? Not at all. They are simply the rules according to which power operates;—the rules prescribed by the All-wise to the might of the All-powerful. And to what, more

or less, does this amount than to the unintermitting will of the Supreme Disposer,—with his accompanying power ever giving it effect? That the wisdom which prescribed the laws was equally infinite with the power whose operations they were to regulate, we have a striking evidence in the very uniformity of the order of creation, from which miracles, if real, are a deviation. To that wisdom, in the framing of the original constitution, all possibilities were intuitively present. And thus all the arrangements were rendered so absolutely perfect, as not to require alteration, or to be susceptible of change for the better. But still it is not the less true, that, with infinitely more ease than that with which a skilful human artificer can touch his secret springs, and vary or arrest the movements of his own machine,—one volition of the supreme will could, in an instant, reverse all the movements—vast and complicated as they are, and rapid beyond the speed of thought—of all the unnumbered worlds, and systems of worlds, that roll in the immensity of space;—or, in as incalculable a “twinkling of an eye,” bring them all to a stand!

Be it further observed,—that to deny the possibility of miracles would amount to denying, not only the ability of the Godhead to certify, by satisfactory evidence, his mind to his creatures, but even his ability to *reveal his mind to them at all*. For the very idea of *inspiration*,—and of *revelation by*

*means of inspiration,**—involves *miracle*:—inasmuch as, God's directly imparting what is in his mind to the mind of any of his creatures—if we cannot absolutely pronounce it *contrary* to any law of nature,

* "*Revelation by means of inspiration.*"—In his masterly Address, at the opening of "New College, London," Dr. Harris makes a distinction between *revelation* and *inspiration*, with which the phraseology here used does not accord.—"*Inspiration*," he says, "*is something distinct from, and additional to, revelation.*" This he lays down, as "one of the first facts which the Bible brings to our notice on this subject." And he speaks of "the inspiration of the sacred writers" as "*presupposing* divine revelation."—Having mentioned three steps as "conceivable" in "the transmission of truth from the Divine Mind, through prophet or apostle, to the general human mind,"—namely (in their abbreviated form) "the objective truth presented,—the subjective illumination in which it is seen, also coming from without,—and the influence which secures its transmission to others;"—he considers the last of these as what properly constitutes *inspiration*,—the other two, which have precedence of it, being, it is presumed, included in *revelation*.—Now I hate "strifes of words;" and when a writer, and especially such a writer, explains distinctly the sense in which a word is used by him, and keeps by that sense, I freely allow him, if there be no heresy in it, to have his own way.—It is very likely too, that, as a Septuagenarian, I may be somewhat old-fashioned in my notions both of words and things. Right or wrong, I have been accustomed to understand the term *inspiration* in a more comprehensive sense; as, in truth, including the *entire process*, of which the separate steps have been mentioned:—the presentation of truth to the mind; the fitting of the mind by a synchronous influence (for I can hardly in imagination separate them) for its right ap-

seeing it belongs to a sphere quite above our range,—is yet something so completely out of the ordinary and established course of things, as they come under our observation, as to entitle it, at any rate, to the designation of *supernatural*. And *supernatural*, in

prehension and reception;—and the qualifying of the subject of this divine illumination for the infallible communication to others of the truth thus imparted. Is the last qualification alone what is properly denominated *inspiration*? Are we interdicted from applying the idea of the *in-breathing* of the Holy Spirit, when the Mind of God directly and mysteriously *reveals* itself to the mind of man,—imparting to the latter unknown truth, and enabling it to apprehend and receive it?—When Paul says, “All Scripture is *given by inspiration of God*,”—he evidently means, not its being given *by the prophets*, as inspired so to give it, *to their fellow-men*,—but its being given *by God to the prophets themselves*:—and to them it was given “*by inspiration*.” It was the scripture itself—the writing—(that is, of course, what the writing contained)—that was *divinities*.—It was alike received by the prophets from God, and communicated by the prophets to men, *by inspiration*. It was as thus given from God—*God-breathed*—that it had, and continues to have, its supreme authority, and that it is sufficient for perfectly fitting “the man of God”—(the Christian minister)—for every department of his sacred function.—When Peter says of the prophets, that “the Spirit of Christ which was in them—testified beforehand of the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow,”—it was *revelation*, doubtless; but was it not *inspiration* too?—and was it not *revelation by inspiration*? Not that the prophets fully understood the true spiritual meaning of what was thus supernaturally imparted to them. It was not meant that they should. The full disclosure of such import was kept in re-

such a case, if it be not a synonyme for *miraculous*, is certainly as near to it as possible.

Though I have said thus much on this topic, I hardly imagine that any question is likely to be made as to the *possibility* of miracles *physically considered*.

serve for future times; agreeably to Paul's words respecting a certain part of "the mystery of Christ,"—"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."—Thus too, with regard to the "ambassadors of Christ" under the New Dispensation. When Christ promised that "the Holy Ghost, whom the Father was to send in his Name, would teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them,"—that he would "receive of his, and show it unto them,"—that he would "guide them into all truth:" are we not correct in saying that this was to be done *by inspiration*?—Our best way, perhaps, is to look, for an answer, to the day of Pentecost. How were these promises of their Master then fulfilled to his apostles?—"Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts ii. 2—4. Now, what have we here? When they were thus "filled with the Holy Ghost," there was evidently the immediate and marvellous communication to their minds of a clear and full and unerring apprehension of the entire scheme of evangelical truth, and of the principles of harmony between the Old Dispensation and the New,—of the prophecies, and types, and promises of the former economy, as having found their fulfilment in the birth, and life, the teaching, the works, the death, the re-

There is another description of impossibility ; which, so far from denying, we at once admit to be beyond dispute,—and for which, indeed, we resolutely contend. It is the *moral* impossibility of their ever taking place, but for some worthy and adequate end.

surrection, and the ascension of their Divine Lord, and now in the establishing of his throne, and the opening of his spiritual reign;—and there was along with this flood of divine light, the ability to impart, “as the Spirit gave them utterance,” the knowledge they had thus received.—And is it not the whole of this process that is properly styled *inspiration*? And then, when, along with this knowledge and this ability to impart it, alike “given by inspiration of God,” they were, at the same time, empowered to call in omnipotence to affix to their commission and to their message the credentials of “signs, and wonders, and diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,”—their qualifications, as the plenipotentiary ambassadors of heaven, were completed.

This difference may be merely a verbal one. Uniformity, however, as far as attainable, in our theological terminology, has its importance. And, if I am wrong, I am not yet too old, nor, I trust, too obstinate, to be corrected. Such a difference, with perhaps another or so of a similar character, are far from being such as to hinder me from expressing my hearty admiration of the clearness, the elegance, the vigour, and, above all, the decision and faithfulness, of that address, and my congratulation of the churches, in their having such a man at the head of such an Institution;—the man who, in these days of abounding “heady and high-minded” speculation, and of semi-sceptical faith as to both the authority and the permanence of the Divine Word,—makes the following noble and beautiful avowal:—
“The place which the Bible occupies in the history of the

This is something essentially different. It is neither more nor less *than* the impossibility of God's doing anything inconsistent with the perfection of either his intellectual or his moral nature. This is an impossibility founded on all we know of his character, as a Being infinitely wise, infinitely holy, and infinitely good;—never actuated by caprice;—never doing extraordinary and marvellous things for

world knows no parallel. As a system of objective truth for a fallen race, it admits of no improvement, and of no increase. There are no heights nor depths, no lengths nor breadths, which are not already included in it. Of self-advance it can know nothing;—it is already at the goal; its only grief is, that man will not follow. All his wanderings it has foreseen; all its emergencies provided for. Its scheme was laid at the first on the calculation of every element in man's nature, and every combination and development of which those elements admit. Holding in its hand the key of every moral difficulty, and having its finger on every spring of human improvement, its march through time has been marked by a train of blessings. Silently as the light it comes, and the darkness of ages flees before it. With the majesty of law it comes; and the anarchy of evil subsides into order and peace. It comes as an angel of mercy, bringing, to all that receive it, self-restoration, and restoration to God, and an undying zeal for the restoration of others. There is no form of guilt which it has not vanquished, no intensity of anguish which it has not assuaged. And still it awaits each succeeding generation, on a higher level, and on a new starting-point, beckoning the way to unattained heights of knowledge and excellence. And its achievements attest alike its divinity and its truth.”—(*Introduct. Lect. at the opening of the New College, &c.* pp. 48, 49.)

frivolous and petty ends ;—never “doing wonders” that terminate in themselves,—that is, terminate in nothing,—serving no purpose but the production of a vacant and unprofitable amazement ;—and above all, never doing them for objects that are unrighteous, or malevolent, or, in any way unworthy of himself.—This, I repeat, is an impossibility for which we unequivocally and earnestly plead. And the mention of it leads me on, naturally, to my *second* head of discussion.

SECTION II.

PROBABILITY OF MIRACLES.

When we speak of the PROBABILITY of miracles, we are to be understood, of course, as referring to the Scripture miracles.—The very use of the word may startle the reader. And not unnaturally, or without reason. The probability of miracles !—he will be ready to exclaim ; does not improbability belong to their very nature ? Are not *miraculous* and *probable* terms mutually contradictory ? In the sense in which the terms are thus used, we at once answer—Certainly. Miracles are, in their very nature, improbable,—highly improbable. Considered absolutely, or in themselves, and without regard to circumstances and ends, nothing can be more so. If they were not ; if they were events such as we might naturally look for,—they would cease to be miraculous. They would awaken no

surprise. They would be utterly unfit for their avowed purpose.—But a thing may be, in a high degree, improbable in itself, and have every imaginable presumption against it: which, under certain circumstances, may become probable, and have even stronger presumptions in its favour than against it. Without now affirming anything, let us take the case hypothetically. Make the supposition, without assuming it as fact,—that in the government of the infinite God, there is an object of high importance to be attained; an object in all respects worthy of the divine character for both wisdom and goodness; and further, that this object cannot be effected in any other way than by a temporary deviation from the established course of things in the physical world:—on such a supposition, we distinctly hold and affirm, there arises a presumption in favour of the required deviation taking place;—a presumption, the proportion of whose strength is in the direct ratio of the magnitude of the object to be attained.

On this subject, there exists, in my apprehension, —(and the ground is not new,—how, in the nature of things, could it be so?)—a great and prevailing error, as to the principles on which, under the administration of an infinitely wise and good Being, probabilities ought to be estimated. We state the case thus. There are two departments of the divine government. There is, on the one hand, his government of the *material* or *physical* world:—and there is, on the other, his

government of the *intellectual, moral, spiritual* world. In the mind of no soberly-and-soundly-thinking man can there be one moment's hesitation as to the comparative importance of the one and of the other. In no balance, of which the weights have the stamp of truth, can they bear to be weighed against each other. The interest and momentousness of the latter transcend those of the former, by degrees which (if the term may with propriety be applied to any thing pertaining to what is created) might well be pronounced infinite:—so that, judging *a priori*, it is infinitely more reasonable, and therefore infinitely more likely, that, in any supposed competition of interests, what is purely material and physical should be made to subserve those of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual, than that the intellectual, moral, and spiritual, should be made to subserve those of the material and physical. The latter supposition we intuitively perceive and feel to be an impossibility, under the administration of any government of which wisdom is at all an attribute; how much more, then, under that of Him whose wisdom is infinite!

There are, then, two courses of events going forward together,—belonging, respectively, to these two departments of the divine government. They are both alike under the direction and control of the same Being. And that Being is at once infinitely wise, infinitely good, and infinitely powerful. Is there, then, anything very irrational, or very impro-

bable in the supposition, that by the Divine Ruler aid should be taken from the one, to subserve the ends of the other ? It is admitted on all hands, that the government of rational, immortal, and morally responsible agents, is something of an incomparably more lofty character than the mere regulation of the movements of a material system, although on the grandest imaginable scale.—Even a system of animated and sensitive natures, apart altogether from reason, conscience, the sense of God, accountableness, and immortality,—a system in which there exists, in endless diversity of modes and degrees, the capacity of enjoyment on the one hand and of suffering on the other,—impresses us with a feeling of importance and interest much deeper than aught, however extensive, ever can, that is material merely and lifeless. And if we feel thus respecting creatures which, when their “breath goeth forth,” or the principle of animation, in what way soever sustained, ceases, “return to the earth as they were,” having no “spirit that returns to God who gave it ;” what are we to say, when we rise to the higher grade of being with which our present argument is concerned?—when we rise to the administration of the Divine Governor over a race of moral agents, possessed, not of animal life merely, but of “living souls,” consciously accountable, and whose existence embraces a future eternity ?—I repeat the question—These two departments of the divine government existing and going on together,—is there anything very unrea-

sonable, or very improbable, in the supposition that by the divine Ruler aid should be borrowed from the one to subserve the ends of the other? Is there anything at all surpassing credibility in the supposition,—which we hesitate not to present as what we believe to be the fact,—that the deviations from the established order of the *material* world, which we call miracles, might form as essential a branch of the provisions and arrangements of the *moral* department of the divine administration, and of the instituted means of evolving its secret counsels, and of working out its divinely important ends,—as the laws by which that order is maintained are themselves essential in the department to which they belong? Why (I have often asked myself)—why such a jealousy—a jealousy so morbidly sensitive—of any the slightest departure from the laws of the material universe, if by such departure a valuable end is to be answered in the intellectual, moral, and spiritual universe? In this there has ever appeared to my mind something exceedingly unreasonable, and, withal, not a little imbecile and childish. It indicates a low, narrow, unworthy view of the divine government and its administrative laws. It seems to be forgotten, that the moral branch of that government has its laws, as well as the physical. Be it admitted, that the material universe was constructed upon a plan;—a plan which embraced the foresight of all futurity. But let it not be overlooked, that so was the whole system of God's moral administration.

That system, of course, was not one that could possibly, like the system of external nature, be called forth at once, by the divine *fiat*, into visible being :—but from the very first, before it began to be evolved, the entire scheme was in the infinite mind, in all its vastness of amplitude, and all its minuteness of detail,—embracing the whole future of human history,—and that history a comparatively minute fraction in that of a universe of worlds. And who, then, will take it upon him to affirm, that into the plan and constitution of the moral administration there could not, or there did not, enter the principle, that, for the attainment of its purposes, the physical should be subservient to the spiritual,—and that, when required for any important end, affecting the condition and prospects of its rational inhabitants, the laws of the material world should be overruled and suspended ? Who will venture to say, that this might not be one of the original laws of the moral department, just as much as the principle of gravitation, or any other principle in external nature, is a law of the physical ? And the very uniformity of the order of external nature, would all the better fit it for answering this, as one, and none of the least important, of its ends ;—a consideration, by the way, which would be in full accordance with a principle which pervades the whole of the divine works,—namely, the *economy of means*, or the effecting by the same instrumentality of a variety of distinct purposes.—Nay, we go further ; we rise high-

er. Does not the supposition we have thus made, of one department of the divine administration borrowing, for the effectuation of its purposes, from another, accord with what, in point of fact, we know to be the case? And does it not, moreover, bring before our minds a most interesting and elevating view of all the departments of that administration, as constituting one stupendous and magnificent whole?—No one who admits a God, can consistently deny a providence. Now, it has been made an argument—and it is a beautifully conclusive one—for the unity of the Godhead, that, in travelling through all the departments of nature, we never light upon any region containing any indications of the dictates of a different will, and the operation of a different power. There pervades every department a perfect unity of design. Wheresoever we go,—and how widely and how deeply soever we explore the arcana of nature,—it is still the same God.—Pass we, then, from creation to *providence*;—and what do we find? Is not the God of providence, in working out his ends, ever making use of the elements, resources, and powers of nature;—thus making creation subservient to providence?—Pass we, then, again, to *revelation*:—and suppose “the God of grace” (the character in which it is the special object of revelation to make him known) making both nature and providence subserve the purposes of redemption;—*nature*, in attesting to men his authority in the message of mercy,—and *providence*,

in carrying out to their completion its blessed results:—is there not in this the same oneness of principle?—do not we still see the same God, following out the same plan,—making the different departments of his complex administration mutually subservient to one another,—nature to providence, and nature and providence to redemption;—thus combining them all into one consistent and magnificent whole,—and holding out to us manifestations more and more full and satisfactory, of the unity of his Being and his character?

Let me illustrate my meaning by a simple comparison;—a comparison taken from what is human, but, in the principle of it, bearing with infinitely greater force on our conclusion, when transferred to what is divine.—A mechanician, let me suppose, has devised and completed a machine. Its structure in each of its parts, and in its entire complexity, is as perfect as human ingenuity and long-practised skill are capable of making it. All its movements are beautifully uniform. Its adaptation for its intended purpose is exquisite. So far as that purpose is concerned, it cannot be improved. It works to admiration.—In such a case, the probability certainly is, that the maker will not think of introducing any change; seeing in a structure thus faultless every alteration would be for the worse. The machine, therefore, would be kept going on as at the first, to the continued satisfaction of the inventor and artificer, and the delight and

wonder of all who have the opportunity of examining it.—Thus far all is clear. But suppose now further,—that circumstances should occur, in which the continuance of the regular movements of the said machine exposed a human life to danger;—and that, by simply stopping or changing one of those movements for but a few seconds, that life could be saved;—and yet more, that it is in the power of the maker and owner, with perfect ease, to stop or to change that movement,—and to do so, without in the slightest degree injuring his machine, or even at all interfering with and impeding the chief purpose of its construction:—if, in these circumstances, we knew the maker and owner to be a man of unusual sensibility and benevolence, or even of no more than ordinary humanity,—should we not feel it by far too feeble an expression to say that it was *likely* he would stop or change the movement?—should we not think we insulted himself, and maligned his character, if we pronounced his doing so less than *certain*? If, merely because he was enamoured of the beauty and regularity of a mechanical motion, he were to refuse interference, and allow life to perish; what should we think of the man's heart,—and what too of his head? Should we not look upon him with equal detestation for his cruelty, and contempt for his childish imbecility?—setting him down at once as a heartless monster, and as a senseless fool?—And if thus you would think of the fellow-man who could act such a part, what is to be

thought of the God, who, when a world's salvation was in the question,—involving not the safety of a human life merely, or of hundreds and thousands of such lives, but the eternal well-being of millions of immortal souls,—should allow that world to perish, for want of evidence of his willingness to save it, rather than allow the order of the material creation to be, in a single point, or for a single moment, interfered with?—and that too, although not the slightest injury was, by such interference, to be done to the system? For surely by no one will it be held an injury, to be made subservient to a purpose incomparably transcending in importance any or all of those which, by its uninterrupted regularity, it is effecting.

Excepting in one particular, the cases I have thus been comparing are closely analogous. The particular in which they differ is this:—that in the case of the mechanician, the evil was not by him anticipated, nor, consequently, the need for his interference;—whereas, in the case of the divine Creator and Ruler, all was in full anticipation; and the occasional deviations from the order of the physical creation entered as essentially into the all-perfect plan of his moral administration, as the laws by which that order was fixed entered into the constitution of the physical creation itself. But such a difference there necessarily is, between every thing human and every thing divine;—between the purposes and plans of a creature who “knoweth not

what a day may bring forth," and the purposes and plans of Him who "knoweth the end from the beginning." It evidently does not, in the least degree, affect the principle of the analogy, or invalidate the force of the conclusion deduced from it.

A word or two more, in illustration and support of that conclusion.—Suppose it demonstrated—(and the materials for such demonstration are ample in the entire history of the religions of mankind, and of the speculations of human wisdom about things divine)—that a revelation from God of his character, and mind, and will was a desirable, and—if men were to have the knowledge of the true God at all—a necessary thing. From this desirableness and necessity there might arise ground for presumptive probability that such a revelation might be vouchsafed. Not that men had any *title* to such a favour, and far less to that marvellous scheme of mercy which the Book we believe to contain the revelation is chiefly designed to make known; but a likelihood suggested simply by the great general position of that revelation, that "God is good."—Whatever, then, might be the amount of this probability,—the probability that such a revelation might be given,—it is very evident that there is precisely the same amount of probability in behalf of the evidence necessary for its attestation;—inasmuch as an unattested revelation would be of little avail,—would indeed be no revelation at all: for how could it be depended upon? Dr. Paley states this

strongly, but with characteristic clearness:—"In what way," says he, "can a revelation be made, but by miracles? In none which we are able to conceive. Consequently, in whatever way it is probable, or not very improbable, that a revelation should be communicated to mankind at all, in the same degree is it probable, or not very improbable, that miracles should be wrought. Therefore, when miracles are related to have been wrought in the promulgating of a revelation manifestly wanted, and, if true, of inestimable value, the improbability which arises from the miraculous nature of the thing related is not greater than the original improbability that such a revelation should be imparted by God."* —What, then, are we to think of any system of scepticism, which, supposing a revelation needed, would, by this weak-minded stickling for the undisturbed movements of the material machine, deprive its Almighty Framer of the power of giving the requisite attestation to his own truth?

When, indeed, the government of an all-wise and all-gracious Being over immortal and responsible subjects is concerned—(for at present I have no argument with the deniers of man's immortality and accountableness, any more than with the atheist)—it does appear to me, that the principle of thus calculating probabilities merely according to the uniformity of nature's laws, and not according to the

* Evidences of Christianity :—preparatory considerations.

magnitude of moral ends, is among the most unreasonable—the most futile and fallacious—that can well be fancied.—Let it be granted, then,—who ever thinks of questioning it?—that we have the fullest and clearest evidence of the uniformity of the course of nature:—let it be further granted,—for this too who ever thinks of questioning?—that from this uniformity there arises an unlikelihood of deviation. Be it so. Ought it not, on the other hand, to be granted, with equal readiness, that such unlikelihood continues to exist, only so long as we do not see any *sufficient reason* for such deviation? So soon as we see *an end*—an end of adequate importance,—and an end which either cannot be accomplished otherwise at all, or which this is the best and most suitable method of effectually accomplishing;—the case comes to be entirely changed. The unlikelihood now is on the other side;—not that there *should*, but that there *should not*, be such a deviation:—and, according to the nature and importance of the end to be answered, is the probability great that there *should*. The probability rests on the twofold ground,—*first*, that *moral* ends—ends involving the character, and state, and destinies of immortal beings, and these in connexion with the manifestation and security of the moral glories of the Godhead, and with the credit of his government and laws, are, beyond all calculation, superior to any that are merely physical and temporary;—and *secondly*—that by such deviation, no harm what-

soever accrues to the fabric and order of the material universe itself;—no injury to its rational or sensitive inhabitants;—no such permanent changes in its constitution, or in any of its various adaptations, as would mar the evidences of natural religion, by mutilating the proofs of the divine skill and benevolence.—And to suppose, that merely for the sake of maintaining unbroken the regular uniformity of a system of external mechanism, an eminently valuable object—an object of high benevolence and high moral excellence in the spiritual department of the divine administration,—should be foregone and forfeited,—is to suppose what is inconsistent with every notion we can form of either the wisdom or the goodness of the Divine Being; placing him, in fact, in regard to both these qualities, beneath the level of his creatures.

The general sum of all that has thus been said on the calculation of probabilities, is this:—that there is a previous presumption *against* miracles, from their being, in themselves, departures from the established course of things:—but that there is a contrary presumption, and a stronger one, *in their favour*, in case of the existence of any important end, under God's moral government, which cannot be effected without them, or which may be best effected by them.

SECTION III.

CERTAINTY OF MIRACLES:—STATEMENT AND OPENING OF THE
ARGUMENT:—REMOVAL OF PREPOSESSIONS.

I proceed to my THIRD HEAD—for which the others have been clearing the way,—namely, the CERTAINTY of the Bible miracles;—in other words, the question,—*whether we, at this distance of time from the period when even the New Testament miracles are said to have been wrought, have sufficient proof, on which to rest our faith of their having been really performed.*

I assume for the present, that miracles *are not wrought now*. My own conviction is that no miracle, attesting the divinity of a commission, or certifying the divinity of a message, has been wrought, since the last of the apostles,—or, at any rate, the last of the supernaturally gifted “ministers of the word” during the primitive age,—finished his earthly course. Some conceive supernatural endowments to have continued to a somewhat later date; fixing or conjecturing different periods for their cessation. But into any discussion of such a question we are not called to enter. Our inquiry regards the miracles recorded in the Bible; and especially in the New Testament:—for if we succeed in establishing the certainty of the latter, the certainty of those recorded in the Old Testament will be equally established;—the two, as has before been

said, being bound up together in a common destiny of *truth* or *falsehood*.

Before entering on the direct argument, there are one or two unfounded prepossessions, which it may be as well to clear away.

1. There are some pious persons, by whom this, and all the other *external* evidences of Christianity, are treated much too lightly. Their real value, I mean, is far from being duly appreciated.—Because certain writers on the evidences of Christianity, who betray a melancholy ignorance of the true nature of the gospel, have dwelt upon them with too great an exclusiveness,—these good and well-meaning people have run to the opposite extreme. Alleging that they are not means of conversion;—that no one ever was brought to the true faith of Christ by the study of such outward proofs;—they have spoken slightly of them,—as if, now at least, they had become, in a great measure, useless,—and even, they at times insinuate, rather prejudicial than profitable.—This is a grievous mistake. It is a reflection upon God. That, surely, ought never to be lightly thought of, or spoken of, which the all-wise author of the Bible saw fit to employ for the authentication of his revealed truths. Not a few instances, moreover, are specified in the New Testament, in which the miraculous proofs of the divine mission of Christ and his apostles, and of the divine authority of what they taught, are represented, not only as having been intended for conviction—(which itself would

have been enough)—but as having actually produced it. Mistake me not. I do not mean that they produced genuine faith, independently of the accompanying agency of the Spirit of God. But they were one of the means, by which that Spirit operated upon the rational minds of men,—in awakening attention to the truth, and carrying home the conviction of its divinity. We cannot work miracles now. But I hold, that he comes the nearest to the actual working of a miracle, who most satisfactorily succeeds in proving that a miracle has been wrought. The argument, therefore, is by no means, as by some has been surmised, useful for no end but the silencing of infidelity; though even that would be no trivial matter. But, by the blessing of God, it may do more. It may be one of the means of conviction and conversion. The same divine Spirit, who made use of miracles at the time when they were wrought, for exciting attention, and ultimately leading to the believing acceptance of the saving truth, may still make use, for the same purpose, of the evidence of their having actually been done. If we should even succeed in dispossessing any mind of an unhappy prejudice, and so opening it to the more free admission of divine lessons, we shall not have argued in vain.

2. There is another ground on which, by a more learned class, the evidence of miracles is undervalued,—the ground occupied by those modern German writers, who, in conformity to the *inward*

light of the *intuitionists*, attribute so much to the testimony of what they call *Christian consciousness*.—On the same principle on which they rest their depreciation of the external evidences for the existence and attributes of God, they are led to depreciate also the historical evidence of Christianity. Neander thus writes:—"As the intuitive consciousness of God indicates to the human mind the existence of the omnipresent power and the self-revelation, so does the Christian consciousness testify that Christ lived, and that he continues by his Spirit to operate upon mankind. The works of creation only reveal God to him who already has a consciousness of the divine existence; for he who has not God within can find him nowhere. So it is only he who has a Christian consciousness that can recognise Christ in the fragments of tradition and the manifestations of history, or that can comprehend the history of Christ and his church."* This does seem a very extraordinary statement. Without inquiring at present into its consistency, on the subject of the divine existence, with the representations of Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, respecting the learning of that fundamental truth from "the creation of the world"—"the things that are made,"—and with the appeals to the same description of evidence in many other parts of Holy Writ;—what

* Quoted in Kitto's Journal of Sacred Literature—No. III. Pp. 111, 112. Art. On the nature of a miracle.

are we to make of the application of the same principle to the fact of "Christ's having lived,"—or to the "comprehending of the history of Christ and his church?" We would not set aside consciousness from among the proofs of the being of a God. It harmonizes with all the evidences from external nature. But how *consciousness*, of what description, soever, can "testify that Christ lived,"—testify to the fact of his having been 1800 years ago in our world,—is, we confess, quite beyond us. It is in the region of mysticism,—into which we have no inclination to try our power to penetrate. And as to a "*Christian* consciousness" being necessary to attest this fact, or to qualify a man to "comprehend the history of Christ"—meaning, we presume, the account of his life given in the gospels,—it seems to us to involve the palpable contradiction of the necessity of the man's having a "*Christian* consciousness"—that is, the necessity of his being a *Christian*—before he can *know Christianity*!—Common sense says, we *must*, in the first instance, have a *historical* Christianity,—a Christianity of *facts*. And with the ascertainment of the historical reality of its facts—the facts which form the basis of the whole doctrinal system—*consciousness can have nothing to do*. The doctrines founded on the facts may receive confirmation from consciousness:—but the facts themselves must be ascertained in the same way—by the same descriptions of proof—with all other facts in history.—And, in regard to *doctrines*,—while the advocates

of this internal test of truth would reduce miracles to a mere confirmatory seal of what their own consciousness has first approved; we would only set over against it the manner in which Jesus himself makes his appeal, both for the divinity of his mission and for the truth of his testimony, to "the works which the Father had given him to do." On these he grounds his claim to the faith of his hearers. When, on one solitary occasion, he puts the question—"And why, even of yourselves, judge ye not that which is right?"—it is not easy to determine whether the appeal is to their natural conscience, to their unprejudiced judgment, or to the knowledge which, as Jews, they ought to have possessed of the previous teachings of their own Scriptures, and their power of discerning the correspondence between those teachings and all that they saw in Himself, and heard from Him. If in what he says of his miracles, our Lord does not mean to represent them as directly evidential,—as proofs addressed to the understandings of men, establishing the divinity of his mission and of his message,—there is nothing to be made of human language. Respecting the principle which makes the nature of the doctrine the proof of the reality of the miracle, or even an essential element in that proof, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

3. It is a sentiment which prevails to no small extent, that, while the evidence from prophecy *grows* by the lapse of time,—for the very obvious

reason, that it is in proportion as ages roll on that the predictions on record successively receive their accomplishment,—the evidence from miracles is of a kind that *gradually loses* in its force.—The former proposition we admit as being next to self-evident:—but this latter cannot be granted, without very material reserve and limitation. We conceive it to have been, on the part of some of the friends of Christianity, a great deal too thoughtlessly conceded.—There are two distinctions, both important, which here require to be made.

In the first place,—We ought carefully to distinguish between the evidence of *a miracle having been wrought*, and the evidence *borne by the miracle, supposing it to have been wrought, to the truth of the commission or the testimony in support of which it is adduced*. Whatever be the case with the former, the latter, it must be very manifest, *remains ever the same*. The only question is—was it ever really wrought? If once satisfactorily proved to have been actually wrought,—no lapse of time—not centuries, nor millenniums, nor eternity itself can ever impair the intrinsic weight of its evidence. Its evidential nature is not at all affected by the nature of the proofs by which its reality has been established. The reality having, in whatever way, been ascertained,—the amount of proof furnished by it admits of no decay.

In the second place,—The distinction is to be attended to, between a testimony that is *traditionary*,

and a testimony that is *recorded*. Of a testimony which is handed down, through successive generations, by *oral transmission*,—it can hardly with reason be questioned that the lapse of time does contribute to impair its certainty. That certainty diminishes, in proportion as the hands, or rather the mouths, multiply, through which the tradition passes. But with regard to a testimony that has been put on record, the case is most materially different. *Recorded testimony undergoes no change*. Assuming the record to have been made at the time when the events are alleged to have happened and the works to have been done—(a point to which all due prominence will be given in our argument hereafter)—the record remains the same. It is not subject to the variations—by addition, mutilation, or change,—to which oral tradition is liable. *Here—in the Book—we have it*. It lies before us, in this collection of writings, as it was originally transferred from the minds of the witnesses to their manuscripts:—and while it thus undergoes no change itself, its evidence, instead of diminishing, may go on progressively augmenting,—in a process of gradual accumulation from various sources,—thus gaining strength rather than losing it.—It is granted, however, as a matter of course, that *we* have not the same evidence of miracles having been wrought, with those by whom they are alleged to have been witnessed. *They* had the evidence of *sense*:—*we* have only the evidence of *testimony*. And the

great inquiry now before us relates to the *sufficiency, or credibility, of the testimony*:—whether, in its nature, circumstances, and amount, it be such as to demand, or to warrant, our belief.

And here we are met, at the threshold, by an objection, which is thrown in our way as a bar to all inquiry;—an objection implying, that the case is of such a nature as to render all investigation superfluous and useless.—It is the argument of the celebrated *David Hume*. “No testimony for any kind of miracles,” it has by this prince of sceptics been boldly said, “can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof.”—Such are the terms in which the position is expressed in the earlier editions of Mr. Hume’s *Essay on Miracles*, and in which it appears as quoted in Principal Campbell’s reply. It was afterwards, as we learn from the preface to the third edition of the *Reply*, stealthily modified. It then came forth in this form —“That no testimony for any kind of miracle *has ever amounted* to a probability, much less to a proof.” The modification is far from inconsiderable. It affirms only what HAS NOT BEEN, instead of what CANNOT BE. The change was introduced, to save himself from the charge of self-contradiction:—inasmuch as he had himself put an imaginary case, so circumstanced as that, if all the supposed particulars were found in combination, the testimony, on his own admission, would be rendered deserving of credit.—Still, however, (and this is what we now have spe-

cially to do with)—it sets aside the credibility of all miracles recorded as having taken place in all past time.—Of Mr. Hume's admission just referred to, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter,—when we may show the gross inconsistency of such admission with the very ground on which his theory rests. At present, I have simply to state the *general principle* of this redoubted argument; an argument propounded by its author with triumphant confidence, as if no demonstration could be more invulnerable. The substance of it has been given thus:—"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature:—and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined;"—for, as there is no such uniform experience of the truth of human testimony, as there is of the uniformity of the laws of nature, the one experience must always be stronger than the other:—and no testimony, therefore, can ever render a miracle probable."—By Dr. Paley, the pith of the argument is given, more tersely, but perhaps with scarcely a fair amount of force, thus:—"It is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true; but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false."

This, it need not be denied, *sounds plausibly*. But its plausibility,—even its plausibility (for of force, as I hope to show, it is utterly destitute)—lies in the sound alone. I do not at all feel myself

guilty of any undue presumption, when I say, that to my mind, since I was able to put premises and conclusion together, the argument has always appeared a specimen of the sheerest and most pitiful sophistry that ever had the sanction of a philosopher's name:—so much so, as to render it hard of belief that its sophistical character was not discerned by the mind itself that framed it. When it is cleared of the mist of ambiguous phraseology in which it is enveloped,—I have no fear of failing to make it apparent, that in what I have thus said of it, I have done it no injustice.—Since expressing myself as I have just done, I have found the following judgment pronounced by a modern and able writer on miracles. Referring to this same argument, he says;—"That sophism is now, I believe, almost exploded. To say the least, it has been very clearly confuted by every writer who has taken the pains to examine it. Nor have the pains so taken been unwisely bestowed. For, though I know not that another case could be assigned, in which any man of Hume's splendid abilities has surrendered his understanding to such obvious fallacies as those adopted by him in his *Essay on Miracles*; yet the effect of those fallacies was very lasting and general, and from the nature of the soil in which they took easy root, demanded, for their eradication, a far more active industry than their inherent strength could deserve."*—This

* *A Treatise on the evidence of the Scripture Miracles.* By John Penrose, M.A.—Preface, page xii.

writer's estimate of the argument, the reader will perceive, is much the same with my own. What I demur to in his statement is, that the sophism has been so frequently and so clearly exposed, as to render it a work of supererogation to meet and refute it anew. My own persuasion is, that there are not a few sceptical minds in which the sophism, palpable as it is, has not only got, but keeps fast, its hold;—and that the general principle of it—the experienced uniformity of Nature's laws on the one hand, and the experienced fallibility and falsity of human testimony on the other, floats, dubiously and undefinedly, in many more; and with just so much of influence as to keep them in a state of indolent indecision on a controversy which, though the most important that could engage their thoughts, they are not very solicitous about pressing to a settlement. Not only for the sake of such,—who need to have the question sounded in their ears —“Why halt ye between two opinions?”—but also, because the discussion will serve to evolve principles, which have a more enlarged bearing than on this sophism alone;—it is my intention to devote an entire chapter to the discussion and exposure of Hume's reasoning;—introducing, at the same time, a few strictures on the grounds on which certain eminent opponents of the sceptic have, respectively, rested their refutations of it.

CHAPTER III.

MR. HUME'S ARGUMENT.

IN the conclusion of last chapter, I adverted to the argument against miracles advanced by the celebrated sceptic David Hume, and stated the substance of it. The argument is designed to show, that no amount of testimony whatever could, in any case, be sufficient to prove their reality, or afford a reasonable ground for believing in their ever having been wrought. It is, I observed, founded on a principle, the statement of which has a semblance of plausibility. There is a balance, it is alleged, of opposite experiences. There is an unvarying experience of the constancy and uniformity of the laws of nature:—there is no such unvarying experience of the truth of human testimony:—the one experience, therefore, must always be more than sufficient to counterbalance the other:—and hence it follows, that no testimony can ever prove a miracle.

While I have admitted that this sounds plausibly; I have ventured, at the same time, to express myself very slightly respecting the logic of the argu-

ment. In doing so, I may, in some minds, have exposed myself to the imputation of self-sufficiency and arrogance, and have recalled to their remembrance the king of Israel's prudent admonition to the vain-glorious Benhadad—"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."—Be it so. I can neither, however, retract nor modify my style of expression. I must speak as I think. It has always appeared to me to be putting the cause of truth to an unfair disadvantage, when more is made of any argument adduced against it than it really deserves; and a larger amount of confutation is bestowed upon it than it at all requires. If a whole volume of laboured reasoning is expended on what a few pages might suffice to refute,—the very look of the bulky treatise unavoidably pre-occupies the mind of the reader with the idea of formidableness. There must, he naturally thinks with himself, be something more than mere superficial plausibility in what is considered as requiring such an array of argument for its demolition. During the entire perusal of the volume, this impression remains. He fancies at times, perhaps, that he sees a very simple principle of refutation for the objection, by which a large proportion of this fagging ratiocination might have been spared:—but the very fact that a writer eminent for learning and judgment has considered all this labour necessary, makes him distrustful of himself, and produces a hesitancy, where, but

for that, there would have been none; and where the more prompt conclusion would have been the legitimate and sound one.—When, in any argument, there can be detected one great and obvious fallacy, the exposure of which is sufficient to undermine and overthrow the entire superstructure; I cannot but regard it as, in general, far better to be satisfied with this exposure, than, after having clearly and satisfactorily made it, to persist, with a wire-drawing minuteness, in laboriously tracing out, and anxiously exhibiting, the pettier flaws of the reasoning; as if we had a special pleasure,—a kind of gratification of vanity,—in showing off our perspicacity in detecting, and our dexterity in disposing of them.—This is just as if a general, after having battered down the fortifications, and obtained triumphant possession of the fortress and citadel, should set himself to show his expertness in breaking and pounding the stones!

SECTION I.

PREFATORY STRICTURES ON DRS. CAMPBELL, CHALMERS, AND
VAUGHAN.

With regard, then, to the argument of Mr. Hume, I have one prefatory observation to offer, respecting the principle, or ground, of its refutation. It is much to be regretted, when, in the principle on which any reply to the argument is founded, there lurks,—although not what amounts to a fallacy, yet

even a weak point. It has always appeared to me, that to a certain extent this is the case with the refutation of it, otherwise so admirable and so complete, by the late Principal Campbell, of Aberdeen. —His first section is entitled—“*Mr. Hume’s favourite argument is founded on a false hypothesis.*” This false hypothesis is, that the evidence of testimony is derived solely from experience. The falsity of this assumption is what he sets himself first to prove. —“That the evidence of testimony is derived solely from experience,” says he, “which seems to be an axiom of this writer, is at least not so incontestable a truth as he supposes it. That, on the contrary, testimony has a natural and original influence on belief, antecedent to experience, will, I imagine, easily be evinced. For this purpose, let it be remarked, that the earliest assent which is given to testimony by children, is, in fact, the most unlimited: —that, by a gradual experience of mankind, it is gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds. To say, therefore, that our *diffidence* in testimony is the result of experience, is more philosophical because more consonant to truth, than to say that our *faith* in testimony has this foundation. Accordingly, youth, which is unexperienced, is credulous; age, on the contrary, is distrustful. Exactly the reverse would be the case were this Author’s doctrine just.”*—And he sets about proving this. I

* Dissertation on Miracles. Part I. Sect. 1.

enter not at all into the reasoning by which he makes good his position as to the original and instinctive propensity in our nature to give credit to testimony. And for this reason:—that even admitting its existence in the full extent to which he pleads for it, it is of little avail in an argument like the present;—and all the reasoning, ingenious and conclusive as it may be, by which it is established, is, in my apprehension, to a great degree, thrown away. For what is this original propensity? Grant that children are the readiest and most confiding of all believers; what is the character of their confidence? Is it any better than an inconsiderate, indiscriminating *credulity*? I thus use his own word:—"children," says he, "*are credulous*." But in the present argument, or in any similar argument, credulity is not at all what we want. To associate, in such a case, our faith in testimony with the instinctive credulity of inexperienced childhood, is not to give justice to truth, but advantage to scepticism. Nothing can be more evident, than that, if our *diffidence* of testimony be the result of experience,—so must be the only description of *confidence* in it, that, in such a case as the one before us, is of any value. For what we want, assuredly, is—not an unthinking, indiscriminating,—but an enlightened, judicious, discriminating, confidence. This is the only kind of confidence that, in the present controversy, is worth disputing about. If we learn by experience in what cases to *distrust*, it is clear that we must

also learn by experience in what cases to *confide*. The two are, in fact, one and the same. According to Dr. Campbell's own admission, it is by experience that we learn to discriminate between different descriptions of testimony; between the circumstances and qualities which are indicative or symptomatic of its trustworthiness, and those, on the contrary, which warrant suspicion or unbelief. Now, if this *discrimination* is the result of experience, then, I contend, the only thing worth disputing about is the result of experience.—For surely it is not on a principle of instinctive *credulity*, that we affirm the reasonableness of receiving as true the testimony of apostles,—or, in other words, of believing in the reality of the miracles by which that testimony is alleged to have been authenticated as divine;—but on the principle of discrimination between credible and incredible testimony; between symptoms that have *always*, symptoms that have *seldom*, and symptoms that have *never* deceived us; in other words, between the *false*, the *probable*, and the *certain*.—I am for granting, then, at once, that, although confidence in testimony is not, originally and primarily, the result of experience, but is, on the contrary, yielded most readily and undoubtingly, antecedently to all experience,—childhood being the age of credulity; yet, that *the only kind* of confidence in testimony that, in such a controversy as the present, is of any worth, *is* the result of experience;—the confidence,

namely, that is yielded on a discriminating observation of the various descriptions of testimony.

Any of my readers who may have perused the *Strictures of Dr. Chalmers on Dr. Campbell's Reply to the argument of Hume* will have perceived a resemblance between certain parts of them and what he has just read. The substance of these paragraphs, however, was in writing before Dr. Chalmers' *Strictures* saw the light;—and while agreeing with him to the extent I have expressed, I must demur to going further. My objection to the ground taken by the learned principal is—not that it is in itself *untrue*, but that he *makes too much of it*; so very much, as to blunt the point and weaken the force of his own argument. Had he rested that argument, indeed, solely on the ground of the instinctive character of the credence given, in the first instance, to testimony, it could never have borne out his conclusion. But it is not so. He proceeds, as we have seen, to state, that, although the original faith we yield to testimony is not the result of experience, but antecedent to it, yet that *diffidence in testimony is*. And my conviction is, that in admitting and maintaining this, he, in effect, admits and maintains the very position which, in denying the validity of his argument, Dr. Chalmers adopts as the basis of his own; or, at any rate, that the difference between the two is so immaterial as by no means to warrant the regarding of the two courses of reasoning as really and essentially distinct, either in principle or in

evolution. While I object to Dr. Campbell, as making too much of a position which, while manifestly true, does not possess such relevancy to his argument as to justify the pains he takes to establish it,—I object no less to Dr. Chalmers, as, on his part, making too much of the alleged discrepancy between them—pronouncing, as he does, that discrepancy to constitute at once the inconclusiveness of Dr. Campbell's reasoning and the substantial validity of his own.—Dr. Campbell regards the “diffidence of testimony” which he represents as the result of experience as being diffidence of *testimony in general*. Dr. Chalmers denies this, and affirms that it is only diffidence of *particular kinds* of testimony, and that diffidence of these kinds implies confidence in other kinds; the one being by experience found to be truthful, and the other to be, in various degrees, doubtful, or invariably false.—Now, this is true; and so manifestly true, as to render very superfluous the amount of reiteration with which it is repeated and pressed. But not less manifestly true is the position of Dr. Campbell, when he represents the diffidence arising from experience as, *in the first instance*, diffidence of testimony *generally*. How can it be otherwise? A statement is made to a child. He gives it immediate and implicit credit. But it proves untrue. He is, for the first time, deceived and disappointed. This is his commencing experience. What will be the effect? Will it not be, that, the next time a statement is made to him, he will feel

not quite so sure as he had been the former time? He has got his first lesson. But he has not yet learned to discriminate persons and circumstances:—so that, whether they be the same or not, his diffidence begins. If a second time he is disappointed, his distrust of what he next hears will be still greater. Meanwhile, however, he finds testimony in other cases true:—and he thus begins to distinguish—to learn discrimination. But diffidence of *certain kinds* of testimony is not his *first* feeling. On his first disappointment he is not to be supposed to have had either time or ability to mark the specialties of person and circumstance. Such discrimination is learned by slow degrees:—and *confidence* in certain kinds of testimony is just as much the result of experience as is *diffidence* of other kinds. The two indeed are learned, and cannot but be learned, *pari passu*. The lessons may be regarded as identical. To learn the one is to learn the other. If “by a gradual experience of mankind” the unlimited assent given to testimony by childhood is “gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds,”—what else can this mean, but that childhood, at first indiscriminately *credulous*, gradually learns when to confide and when to distrust?—And the very fact of our diffidence and our confidence being thus alike learned,—of the power of discrimination being thus acquired,—is itself a clear proof that the credit we attach to testimony in general, is not the result of experience, but is antecedent to it,—an original pro-

pensity of our nature, of which experience subsequently corrects the exercise. Were it otherwise,—were the credit we give to testimony in general the result of experience, it does not appear to me how any credit could be given to testimony *at all*, till we had had the experience.

And, such, indeed, does appear to be the principle of Dr. Chalmers's theory. He holds our faith in "the constancy of nature" as being original and instinctive,—and even as being incapable of increase by experience; experience only teaching us more accurately to distinguish the sameness and the difference of antecedents and consequents. He holds, that, as one observation of a certain sequence following a certain antecedent gives a perfect confidence that from the same antecedent the same sequence will follow again and always,—so one observation of the truthfulness of testimony imparts a corresponding confidence that testimony will prove always true; subsequent experience only teaching, in this case, discrimination of the different descriptions of testimony, as in the other it teaches discrimination of the different descriptions of antecedents. In tracing this analogy, he gives the following illustration:—"But let us try to ascertain what this argument of Dr. Campbell amounts to. There is really nothing in that diffidence of the veracity of others which he has noticed that is at all inconsistent with its derivation from experience. The child who has observed once the conjunction between an event

and the testimony which relates it, is in the same circumstances with regard to this sequence,—as the child who has observed once the conjunction between a stroke on the table with his spoon and the noise which proceeds from it. In the latter case, it will anticipate a repetition of the noise from any stroke upon any substance; and in the former case, it will infer the truth of an event from any testimony of any witness. The confidence, in both instances, is alike strong and alike indiscriminating, and in both instances is checked and limited in the very same way. So long as the child continues to strike on the table, or on any sonorous substance whatever, it will experience the wonted noise. So long as it hears the testimony of a sincere witness, it will experience in the corresponding fact the truth of his attestation. But at this stage it will expect a noise from all sorts of substances; and at this stage too, it will count on the truth of all sorts of testimony. The whole amount of the matter is, that it has not yet learned to sort and to discriminate; and the precise office of experience is to enable it to do so. This is all the amount of the growing diffidence which Dr. Campbell speaks of. In the one case, the child has experienced that all impulsion will not be followed up by noise. In the other case, it has experienced that all testimony has not been preceded by the reality of that which the testimony affirms. There is a growing diffidence in the truth of testimony, just as

there is a growing diffidence in the effect of impulsion. This phenomenon is realized in the one process, which is by all allowed to be strictly experimental—and there is therefore nothing in this same phenomenon, that bespeaks the other process not to have been strictly experimental also.”*

On this statement the following remarks suggest themselves:—*First*:—It is not very surprising surely, that there should not be “anything in that diffidence of the veracity of others of which Dr. Campbell speaks inconsistent with its being the result of experience,” when Dr. Campbell’s very position is, that such diffidence *is* the result of experience!—So that, when Dr. Chalmers writes as follows—“When Dr. Campbell says that experience teaches us to be diffident of testimony, we reply, that this wholly depends on the marks or characters where-with this testimony is associated. The same experience which teaches us to be diffident of testimony which presents to notice the usual marks of falsehood, teaches us to be confident in the testimony which presents to notice the usual marks of truth. Dr. Campbell affirms in the general, that experience begets a diffidence in testimony:—we reply, not in all testimony; or, when it is testimony associated with the usual marks of truth,—not in that testimony:”†—when, I say, he writes thus, is it possible he should have conceived he was advancing a posi-

* Works, vol. iii. pp. 80, 81.

† Ibid. pp. 87, 88.

tion from which Dr. Campbell would have withheld his assent? If Dr. Campbell "allows" that "experience is the only measure of a logical or reasonable faith in testimony," as in these his own words he does,—does not this, in connexion with his position that "diffidence in testimony is the result of experience,"—and that confidence in testimony is "by a gradual experience of mankind gradually contracted, and reduced to narrower bounds,"—amount to the admission that experience is the teacher of both diffidence and confidence,—that is of the discrimination of the different kinds of testimony? Where, then, is the difference between this and the statement that "the same experience which teaches us to be diffident of the testimony which presents to notice the usual marks of falsehood, teaches us to be confident in the testimony which presents to notice the usual marks of truth?"—But—

Secondly:—Dr. Chalmers is in the same predicament with regard to his *confidence* in testimony, in which he places Dr. Campbell in regard to his *diffidence* in testimony; and thus seems to expose himself to the full force of his own objection. He objects to Dr. Campbell's "affirming in the general that experience begets a diffidence in testimony,"—alleging that it is "not in all testimony," but only in certain kinds of testimony. And yet he himself affirms the result of experience to be *confidence* in *all* testimony, or in testimony *generally*:—for, ac-

cording to him, "the child who has observed once the conjunction between an event and the testimony which relates it . . . will infer the truth of an event from *any testimony of any witness*." Now on what principle can it fairly be denied that the *diffidence* of testimony which is induced by the first experience of falsehood is diffidence of testimony *generally*,—and yet affirmed that the *confidence* in testimony induced by one experience of truth, is confidence in testimony *generally*—"any testimony of any witness?" Might it not be fairly retorted—"Not in all testimony—or, when it is testimony associated with the usual concomitants of *falsehood*—not in that testimony?"—that confidence, in a word, is not, any more than diffidence, learned by experience as to testimony generally, but only as to particular descriptions of testimony? Whatever is true of the one is, and must be, true of the other. Learning *diffidence* and learning *confidence* are alike learning *discrimination*.—And I may further ask;—if it be indeed the case, that our first credit to testimony arises from our once having found it true,—and that, from the very first experience of the "conjunction between the testimony and the event,"—that is, from our first experience of the truth of testimony, we will, on the same principle as that of our faith in "the constancy of nature," infer, unhesitatingly and indiscriminately, the truth of *all* testimony;—how, in that case, should we stand, were it so to happen that our first experience of tes-

timony was the experience, not of its truth, but of its falsehood? In that case,—on the principle of “the constancy of nature,” must not the hapless individual to whom this untoward chance occurs, be as much warranted, and even bound, to conclude that all testimony must be held false, as the other is in his case, that all is to be held true? Must not “the constancy of nature” be in the one case on the side of truth, and in the other on the side of falsehood;—the mere accident of what a child happens first to hear thus inverting nature’s law? The parallelism, indeed, between the “constancy of nature” and the constancy of human testimony, is at best a very precarious one. Of the latter, in truth, such constancy is far from being an attribute.—And this leads me to observe—

Thirdly:—that there are descriptions of testimony, between which and the case of the child striking with the spoon on the table and hearing the emitted sound there is no parallelism. I refer to those statements which relate to *past events*, of which the child is not, and never can become, a witness. In the case of the spoon and the noise, the child has the stroke and the sound both before him. He makes the one; he hears the other. And thus, witnessing both, he expects from the repetition of the stroke a repetition of the sound,—the same sequence from the same antecedent. Now, this may form a sufficiently fair analogy for cases in which the child has the opportunity of witnessing the event

by which the testimony he has heard is verified,—of at once hearing what is said and seeing the corresponding fact.—But is the credence yielded by childhood to testimony confined to such cases?—or does such credence only begin when the verification of the testimony has been witnessed? So it ought to be, on the theory of its commencing with experience, and founding on its first experience its future expectations. It would, in that case, be limited to the testimony of events that were yet to *be*,—events, which, like the sound from the stroke of the spoon, were to follow the announcement, and attest its truth. But is it so? Is the first credence of childhood never given save in such cases,—cases, in which it can see the fact as well as hear the testimony? Does the child never yield his first belief to what Papa tells him *he* has seen, whether more recently or more remotely, because he has not seen it himself? Who will say so? The credence is immediate and absolute. And yet, in such a case, he has nothing of the nature of experience to be the ground of his first faith. The faith is in the testimony,—in the testimony alone,—unaccredited by anything of the kind:—whence it surely follows, that experience is not the originator of the faith in testimony, but becomes its subsequent corrector,—the teacher of discrimination. And in such cases, it cannot be his experience of the truth of the first testimony—of the first “conjunction between an event and the testimony which relates it”—that be-

comes the ground of his faith in testimony for the future; for no such experience has he yet had.—And no great matter, after all, which side of this question one may take:—for—

Fourthly:—Where is the mighty difference between the two cases,—between the case of the child that yields an indiscriminating credence to testimony antecedently to any experience, and that of the child who yields the same indiscriminating credence from the first time of his finding what papa, or mamma, or nurse tells him prove true? Are not the two youngsters very much in the same plight? Have they not very much the same lessons to learn? Have they not both to learn diffidence,—and both too to learn confidence?—both, that is, to learn when to believe, when to disbelieve, and when to doubt;—to learn to discriminate between the various kinds of testimony?—And this is, in truth, what both doctors substantially hold. It is not easy, indeed, to conceive how either of them could have held any thing else. It has become an adage that “Doctors differ;” and of theological and medical it is equally true. But it is true too of both, that many a time they differ without differing. And, in as far as their difference tells upon their common argument, such, I am persuaded, is the case in the present instance.—“Had Dr. Campbell separated testimony into its different species,” says Dr. Chalmers, “he would not have come forth with an assertion of such sweeping generality, as that experience

begets a diffidence in testimony;—or at least, he would have recognized a kind of testimony our faith in which is strengthened by every day's experience."*—But is this fair? Is it doing Dr. Campbell justice? Does *he* indeed "recognize no such kind of testimony?" Is not the entire scope of his subsequent argument, on the contrary, to show that, as the ground of our faith in miracles, we have precisely such a kind of testimony? And from this is it not manifest, that the diffidence in testimony which, according to Dr. Campbell, is induced by the first experience of falsehood is not a diffidence that is to continue to affect our faith in every kind of testimony in all time coming, but is just the simple lesson that *all* testimony is not to be held truthful,—and thus, in fact, neither more nor less than the first lesson of discrimination?—Suppose we apply Dr. Chalmers's principle of criticism in this citation to his own theory. He holds that, just as the noise from the one stroke of the spoon produces, in the child's mind, the full assurance that a second will produce the same,—so the correspondence in one instance of the event with the testimony produces the equally full assurance of its corresponding in every other:—"the confidence in both cases is alike strong and alike indiscriminating." Is this "assertion" one of less "sweeping generality" than the other? Is it less sweeping on the side of

* Vol. iii. page 98.

confidence than Dr. Campbell's on the side of *diffidence*? And might we not, therefore, with the same fairness, *mutatis mutandis*, say—"Had *Dr. Chalmers* separated testimony into its different species, he would not have come forth with an assertion of such sweeping generality as that experience produces a *confidence* in testimony:—or at least he would have recognized a kind of testimony, our faith in which is *weakened* by every day's experience?"—Are not the two doctors thus placed, as exactly as they well can be, on a par? When the one speaks of experience begetting diffidence, and the other of its begetting confidence, in testimony, —neither is the one nor the other to be understood as meaning that the diffidence on the one hand, or the confidence on the other, is to continue to attach ever after, to all descriptions of testimony alike,—but that the diffidence and the confidence are to be equally corrected by experience,—taught discrimination,—both discovering, that there is a kind of testimony "our faith in which is *strengthened*," and a kind of testimony "our faith in which is *weakened*, by every day's experience."—While, therefore, we again admit, with regret, that, by dwelling at so much length, and with so much earnestness, on what he terms Mr. Hume's "false assumption,"—and thus giving his reader the impression of his regarding the refutation of it, and the establishment of his own hypothesis as constituting the very gist of his cause,—Dr. Campbell has

rather enfeebled than strengthened his argument;—yet we hold this to be the entire amount of the disadvantage. As he prosecutes his course of reasoning, he takes fully into his account the actual results of experience, as the teacher both of diffidence and of confidence,—and the various ways in which human testimony may be either established, or invalidated and overthrown. As one of various specimens which might be adduced of the principles on which he argues, the following must suffice;—and, having simply quoted it, I leave the force or weakness of my own strictures (which, as relating to the reasonings of two first rate minds, I offer with all diffidence) to my reader's judgment:—"But how, says Mr. Hume, is testimony then to be refuted? Principally in one or other of these two ways:—*first*, and most directly, by contradictory testimony; that is, when an equal or greater number of witnesses, equally or more credible, attest the contrary;—*secondly*—By such evidence either of the incapacity or of the bad character of the witnesses, as is sufficient to discredit them.—What, rejoins my antagonist, cannot their testimony be refuted by the extraordinary nature of the fact attested? Has this consideration no weight at all?—That this consideration has no weight at all, it was never my intention to maintain:—that by itself it can very rarely, if ever, amount to a refutation against ample and unexceptionable testimony, I hope to make extremely plain. Who has ever denied, that the uncommonness of an event

related is a presumption against its reality; and that, chiefly on account of the tendency, which experience teaches, and this author has observed, some people have to sacrifice truth to the love of wonder? The question only is—How far does this presumption extend? In the extent which Mr. Hume has assigned it, he has greatly exceeded the limits of nature, and consequently of all just reasoning.”*

In the former chapter, I adverted to *Dr. Vaughan's* denial of a miracle's being a violation, or even a suspension, of any of nature's laws; and to the ground on which he rests that denial,—namely, the possible existence of other causes—causes even of a secondary character—than those which come under our cognizance;—the consequent inevitable imperfection of all such experience as can ever by us be possessed;—and the necessary inconclusiveness, therefore, of every deduction from such experience. On our present topic, he writes thus:—“ Herein, we may remark, lay the great fallacy of Hume. He regarded the evidence from experience in reference to the constancy of the laws of nature, as this came before him, as being complete. It embraced, as he supposed, the action of all possible causes, so as to furnish him with a complete induction—no new effect being possible, because no cause had been left out of his calculation that could produce it. Of course, if the case had really stood thus, the question of miracles

* Dissertation on Miracles, &c., Part I. Sect. I.

would have been settled. There could be no miracle.—But, for anything our philosopher knew, there might be many latent causes, even second causes, in existence, besides those, the effects of which had given him the whole of his experience. From these strange forces, supposing them to come into play, strange results might follow. Yes; and notwithstanding all the subtlety of this renowned sceptic, for aught that he could tell there may be a First Cause;—this Cause may be intelligent,—and for some special ends may give special action to a class of second causes, in certain places, and at certain times.”*—Now to this an objection strikes me, of the same nature with that which I have before offered to my friend’s views of what a miracle is. Might not Mr. Hume, in reply to all reasoning founded on such a principle, with some show at least of fairness, have said:—‘This is *hypothesis*. You may, if you please, *suppose* the existence of such second causes, beyond those which we have any opportunity of ascertaining. But, since your premises are hypothetical, your conclusion can be no more. When I speak of the uniformity of the course of nature, or of nature’s laws, I mean by nature nature as it appears in the system in which we mortals have our being. That other laws may regulate, and that another course, the result of these laws, may characterise, other systems, you are quite at

* The Age and Christianity,—pages 91, 92.

liberty to imagine as you will. In such other systems there may be—and in all probability there is—a similar uniformity to that which prevails in our own. And within any one of them, my argument would hold with equal conclusiveness as it does in our own. But to suppose those causes which operate uniformly in one system introduced into another, to effect what is at variance with those of its own fixed constitution, is arbitrary and inadmissible. The possible in one system may be the impossible in another. The possible in some system of worlds of which one or other of the far-distant fixed stars is the sun, may be the impossible in ours. It may, I admit, be very true, that we can pronounce nothing impossible, even for the operation of second causes, if, ere we can make the affirmation, we must become acquainted with all the varieties of such operation throughout the universe. But it only betrays the untenableness of your ground, when, in order to maintain it, you are compelled to quit the region of known realities, and to range through those of unknown possibilities. It is within the limits of a system whose constitution and uniform course we know, that the miracles in question are alleged to have been wrought:—and of the theory which affirms their impossibility, no refutation can be legitimate and fair, that is constructed on the imagined introduction into that system of the operation of laws belonging to another of which we know nothing. The very introduction

of the laws of such other system would itself be a violation of the laws of this. The very thing which is supposed for the purpose of proving that a miracle is *not* a violation of natural laws would thus itself *be* such a violation:—and the proof would be *felo de se*.—Thus, it seems to me, might the sceptic reason; and with somewhat more than plausibility. —“Were the ground assumed in this case,” adds Dr. Vaughan, “as certain as the law—that where none but the same causes exist, the same effects will follow—a miracle, as the contravention of such a rule, would be incredible. But, as the case now stands, all that Mr. Hume has proved is this,—that to a mind possessing a knowledge of all causes, and knowing those causes to be without the disposition, or without the power, to work miracles, there can be no miracle,—a conclusion which may be safely left to its own harmlessness. When the man possessing this knowledge shall arise, it will behove us to receive the law of certainty in this matter from his own lips” *—Now these positions do not, I confess, appear to me so self-evident as they are assumed to be. The assumption on which they proceed is, that a miracle must be effected by the bringing into operation of *some* second cause—*some* natural law—or other; so that the perfect acquaintance with *all* such causes and such laws throughout the universe would supersede the miraculous by

* Age and Christianity. Ibid.

bringing everything within the limit of the natural. But is there not still a power that is above all such natural laws, and causes, and agencies together,—even the power that gave them being,—by which they are all controlled,—and by which, therefore, they may all alike be put in abeyance, and effects produced by its own direct energy in contrariety to every one of them? Is it incompetent to this power to work a miracle, even in this highest possible conception of it, as in contravention to all existing laws and second causes throughout creation? The only way, as before in substance observed, in which a miracle can be proved not to be, a violation of natural laws, is the classing among such natural laws the operation of this very power itself from which they have all originated, and by which they are all maintained; thus identifying with nature the God of nature. And, when the operation of that power has been so classed—classed as a law of nature,—(incongruous and inadmissible as we conceive such classification to be),—still the question recurs, who is to assign its limits to *that* law's working,—or who to prescribe its course? Who but the infinite Being whose the power is? In common with all laws and causes in the universe, his own power must be under the control—sole and absolute—of his own will; to effect whatever he may see needful for the accomplishment of his own counsels. And thus, independently of the operation of all existing laws, “with God all things are possible.”

I am more than inclined to think, with regard to the principles we have been considering, on which testimony is to be estimated, that no small proportion of them, when stripped of the philosophico-metaphysical garb in which they present themselves when they are the subjects of discussion between learned men, are principles which may be found adopted, held, and acted upon, by men of good sound common sense in ordinary life; principles, which it would astound them possibly to hear discussed in the phraseology of the chairs and schools of philosophy; but which, after they had gaped and stared, and marvelled whether they were understanding or not, they would continue to hold and to act upon as they did before,—and might be heard, many a time, condensing in one plain and pithy sentence all that was really worth in the learned lucubrations of many a lecture, and the hair-splitting logomachies of many a controversy.

SECTION II.

DEMONSTRATION OF THE UNSOUNDNESS OF THE ARGUMENT, IN ITS RADICAL PRINCIPLE, AND IN ALL ITS DETAILS.

I shall say no more at present on the principles by which Mr. Hume estimates *probabilities*. I have endeavoured, in last chapter, to show that it is a principle altogether unworthy of the administration of an intelligent, wise, and benevolent Governor;

and deserving of a place only in a system of fatalism, and on the hypothesis of a godless universe. I assume the position,—as one which no man will dispute who wishes to retain his credit for the rationality which is his distinction from the brutes,—that *the moral government of reasonable beings* is a department of the divine supremacy incomparably more momentous and interesting, in its nature and in its results, than the mere superintendence of the order of the material universe,—the mere regulation of its physical movements and productions;—and, as a corollary, or consequence from this, that the probability of a miracle, or of a temporary deviation from the established course of things in the physical creation,—should be estimated as in the direct ratio of the magnitude of the moral end which can be shown to be answered by it:—that, if an end of great importance in the intellectual and moral department of the divine government can be satisfactorily ascertained to be effected by such deviation, the *probability* of its taking place becomes, in proportion to the importance of that end, *greater* than the *improbability* arising from the mere preservation of an unchanging sameness in the operations of physical laws, and the phenomena of a merely material system.

Passing now from all such topics,—I come at once to what I have ever conceived to be, and what by others has been ably demonstrated to be,—the grand *sophism* of the whole argument now in ques-

tion:—a sophism, indeed, lying on its very surface; requiring no lengthened process of investigation to detect, nor any supernatural ingenuity to expose.—The entire argument is built on an *ambiguity* in the meaning of *one word*—the word EXPERIENCE.—Whether this ambiguity was, or was not, perceived by the framer of the argument, I will not presume to say. But this much I must say,—that if it *was not*, it is little to the credit of his *discernment*;—and that if it *was*, it is as little to the credit of his *integrity*. The choice seems to lie between defective *perspicacity* or defective *honesty*,—between an *intellectual* and a *moral* failing. If he discerned the ambiguity, and intentionally availed himself of it, —he was—and that in the most deeply culpable of all imaginable cases—chargeable with the latter;—and if he did *not* discern it, and really fancied his argument free of fallacy,—it will not be easy to protect him from the discredit of singular want of penetration.—Yet, in regard to powers of intellect, *Hume*, all the world knows, was no fool. And we must set down the case as one, and, among many more, far from the least remarkable, of the blinding influence of prejudice, and of fondness for whatever seems fitted to serve a favourite end, by crushing an obnoxious system. What a film there must have been on his mental vision, we shall now endeavour to show, by the brief illustration of a series of observations.

1. I have to show what I mean by the *ambiguity*

of the word *experience*. Let the reader, then, observe.—The *experience* of *any one individual person*, it is clear, must of necessity be exceedingly circumscribed in its extent. It has *two limits*—a limit of *place*, and a limit of *time*. No individual can have any experience whatever, excepting *where* he is, and *while* he is. His experience, as to *place*, can reach no further than to the extent of his own personal presence, and the range of his bodily senses: he can have no experience beyond these:—and his experience as to *time* is necessarily limited to the very brief period during which he himself lives,—or rather during which he not merely lives, but is capable of intelligent observation. All else whatever that he believes—whether of *existences*, of *facts*, or of *events*, he believes, not on the ground of *experience*, but on that of *testimony*. He *could* have no experience of what was *before his time*; he *can* have none of what is *beyond his observation*. Whatever may be, or may have been, the experience of others,—*to him* it is not experience, but *testimony*; and cannot, by possibility, be any thing else.—Observe, then, farther. From this it inevitably follows, that the experience of the present generation, or of any individual in it, can never go to disprove (directly I mean) what is alleged to have taken place, not during the present generation, or during the life-time of any individual belonging to it, but eighteen hundred years ago.—It cannot even be said to be against it. It has not, in truth, and cannot have, anything

whatever to do with it. That any thing is not according to *my* experience *now*, can never be a proof of its not having been according to the experience of those who lived *then*.—In *this* sense, then,—the sense of each man's personal or individual experience,—the word is nothing to his purpose. What we learn of the past, we do not, and cannot, learn by experience; it comes to us entirely by testimony.—Individual experience, then, being nothing to the purpose of his argument,—Observe—

2. If again by *experience* he means—(and this he must mean, if he means any thing worth meaning at all)—*the universal experience of mankind, in all ages and in all nations*;—who is so blind as not to see, that to affirm any thing to be *contrary to experience* in *this* sense is most palpably to *beg the question*? It is impossible to imagine a *petitio principii* more direct and flagrant. For, when divested of its philosophical garb of words, to what does this amount? Is it any thing else whatever, than a simple assertion, clothed in peculiar phraseology, that the things alleged *did not take place*? Analyse the expression, that a thing is “contrary to the experience of all ages and of all nations;” and you will be satisfied, that it is no more—no more whatever—than a peculiar mode of saying that it *never happened*.—“It is a miracle,” says Mr. Hume, “that a dead man should rise to life;—because *that has never been observed in any age or country*.” What is this, but simply denying the fact that a dead man

ever was raised to life from the grave? The whole argument therefore, so far as this assertion about universal experience is concerned, resolves itself, it appears, into nothing more than the philosopher's *ipse dixit*—his own affirmation—that no such thing as a miracle ever took place! But what experience had Mr. Hume of what had taken place in all ages and in all nations?—Still further:—

3. We have seen how it is that *we* come to be acquainted with the experience of those who lived eighteen centuries ago, and in a distant part of the world. It is by *testimony*. It can be by nothing else. All the experience of *others*, whensoever or wheresoever they have lived and acted, is not experience *to us*:—it all resolves itself into *testimony*. What, then, follows? A very important sequence in this argument:—that to affirm *all experience* to be in contradiction to any particular class of facts, is the same thing as to affirm *all TESTIMONY* to be against those facts? Now, in the present instance this is false;—and so thoroughly and notoriously false,—that we *have* testimony *for* them,—the recorded testimony of the only competent witnesses,—those who lived *at the time when*, and *in the place where*, the alleged facts are dated:—and we have *no testimony against them*. That is, we have *experience*, in the only form in which, from the nature of the thing, we possibly could have it,—in favour of the facts; and we have no recorded counter-experience in opposition to them.—Again—

4. *How is it* that the uniformity of the laws of nature and of the order of the material universe, is ascertained? How, but by *testimony*? There is no other way of ascertaining it possible:—the testimony of men in different and distant nations, and in successive ages of the world. Mr. Hume, of course, ascribes it to experience—"it is experience only which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience which assures us of the laws of nature:"—but then, how is this latter experience, in the needed extent, obtained, but by *testimony*?—To what, then, are we thus brought? Why, to these two conclusions:—In the first place,—as indeed we have already seen,—that Mr. Hume's uniform *experience* resolves itself into uniform *testimony*; and that when so taken, his assertion of uniformity is contrary to fact; inasmuch as the testimony, or in other words, the recorded experience, is *not* uniform,—there being testimony or recorded experience, for the *deviations* from the laws of nature, as well as for the uniformity of those laws:—and what is more—*secondly*—That Mr. Hume's own belief in the uniformity of the laws of nature *rests, after all, on the very same description of evidence* with that which he rejects when it comes to be in support of the deviations from that uniformity. He disowns every thing miraculous, on the ground that nature is uniform, and human testimony uncertain and fallacious:—and yet, it is only by this same uncertain and fallacious testimony that his faith in

the uniformity of nature is determined. The evidence of the ground on which he rejects miracles, it thus turns out, is the very same in kind with that on which others believe in them. He laughs at such believers for attaching credit to miracles on the ground of human testimony in opposition to the uniformity of the laws of nature; and yet it is on human testimony, necessarily and solely, that his own faith in this very uniformity of the laws of nature is founded!

5. We have seen that it is *by experience* that *discrimination of testimony* is learned. It is by experience that the disposition to implicit credence, which may be admitted to be the characteristic of childhood, is gradually corrected. This topic has been discussed in the first section of the present chapter; to which, without repetition, the reader is referred. It is enough now to say that such discrimination is the result of experience; consisting in the perception of the testimony that *is* worthy, and of that which is *not* worthy, of our belief and confidence.—This is enough: for from this arises a consideration of no small importance on our present subject. There are laws in the *moral* world, as well as in the natural. And cases are quite supposable, in which the testimony borne to the deviation from the laws of nature in the physical world may be of such a description, and accompanied with such circumstances, as that to suppose it deceptive and false, would imply a greater violation of the principles and laws of man's

moral nature, than the fact to which the testimony relates involves of the laws of the physical creation. The question thus comes to be—not, Have we experience of *testimony* failing us?—but, Have we experience of *such* testimony failing us? And in the case in question—the case of the testimony borne to the divinity of the gospel, on the ground of its *miraculous attestations*,—we are prepared to show that we have not,—no, not in one single analogous case. We have *no* experience of testimony possessing the qualities and the circumstantial accompaniments by which *that* testimony was distinguished, ever deceiving us. Here is the point—the only point. We are prepared, I repeat, to show,—that all experience, whether personal or recorded,—whether that derived from our own observation or from the annals of history, is, without exception, against the supposition of falsehood or imposture in such a case. We shall show this in next chapter; taking it up with special application to a particular miracle—the miracle of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. We shall thus have the benefit of concentration, and of the clearer and more definite illustration of the principle to be established,—the principle that *testimony so circumstanced never failed*; and that its failure would be a moral miracle,—a contradiction to all the principles of our rational, and to all the instincts of our animal nature.

Meantime I have only to remark—

Lastly:—Mr. Hume gives up his own argument.
—Truth is always consistent; error never.—Mr. Hume, as formerly remarked, speaks in terms of vaunting confidence of his argument, as if it were one so manifestly irrefragable, as to lay for ever to rest the matter in dispute. He represents a miracle, —by what testimony soever supported—as “more properly a subject of derision than of argument:”—so that “it is not requisite,” he says, “in order to reject the facts, to be able to disprove the testimony, and to trace its falsehood;”—“such an evidence carrying falsehood in the face of it.” “We need not oppose,” says he further, “even to a cloud of witnesses the absolute impossibility, or the miraculous nature, of the events which they relate; this, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation:”—and, in one oracular word—“No testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof.”—In these statements, there is at least consistency.—If the terms “*miraculous*” and “*absolutely impossible*” be indeed convertible; then was it very unnecessary to add that no kind or amount of testimony could suffice to prove *miracles* to have ever been wrought:—seeing absolutely impossible means impossible to all existing power.—Whether there be such consistency, however, between these statements and the following—let the reader judge:—“I own there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of

such a kind, as to admit a proof from human testimony,—though perhaps it will be impossible to find any such in all the records of history. Suppose all authors, in all languages, agree, that from the first of January 1600, there was a total darkness over all the earth for eight days:—suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people; that all travellers who return from foreign countries bring us accounts of the same tradition, without the least variation or contradiction:—it is evident, that our present philosophers, instead of doubting of that fact, ought to receive it for certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it must be derived.”*—On the ground then, of such a testimony as is thus supposed, even a philosopher, this prince of sceptics admits, might be warranted,—nay upon all our present philosophers it might even be obligatory, to believe what was “*absolutely impossible*:”—they “ought to receive it for certain:”—to receive for certain, that is, what he had previously declared incapable of any proof whatever,—affirming, in unqualified terms, that “no testimony in support of it could ever amount to a probability, much less to a proof.”—I am so much pleased with the clearness and the pithiness of Dr. Campbell’s exposure of the inconsistency with his own principles of the admission thus made by the sceptical philosopher, that, instead of at-

* Essay on Miracles. Part II.

tempting another of my own, I at once adopt it.—After quoting the strong terms in which Mr. Hume asserts the omnipotence of his argument against every attempt to establish miracles by testimony,—he says:—“Yet for the event supposed by the Essayist” (the eight days universal supernatural darkness)—“the testimony would amount to a *probability*; nay to more than a probability, to a *proof*;—let not the reader be astonished,—or, if he cannot fail to be astonished, let him not be incredulous, when I add—to *more than a proof*,—more than a full, entire, and direct proof;—for even this I hope to make evident from the Author’s principles and reasonings.—‘And even supposing,’ says he, i. e. granting for argument’s sake—‘that the testimony for a miracle amounted to a proof, it would be opposed by another proof, derived from the very nature of the fact which it would endeavour to establish.’—Here is, then, by his own reasoning, proof against proof; from which there could result no belief or opinion, unless the one is conceived to be, in some degree, superior to the other:—‘Of which proofs,’ says he, ‘the strongest must prevail,—but still, with a diminution of its force in proportion to that of its antagonist.’ Before the Author could believe such a miracle as he supposes, he must at least be satisfied that the proof of it from testimony is stronger than the proof against it from experience. That we may form an accurate judgment of the strength he here ascribes to testimony,—let us con-

sider, what, by his own account, is the strength of the proof from experience:—‘A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature;—and, as a firm and unalterable experience has established those laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as *entire* as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.’—Again—‘As a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a *direct* and *full* proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle.’—The proof, then, which the Essayist admits from testimony, is by his own estimate, not only superior to a *direct and full proof*,—but even superior to ‘as *entire* a proof as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined!’—Whence, I pray, doth testimony acquire such amazing evidence? ‘Testimony,’ says the Author, ‘hath no evidence but what it derives from experience. These differ from each other, only as the species from the genus.’—Put, then, for *testimony* the word *experience*, which, in this case, is equivalent;—and the conclusion will run thus—‘*Here is a proof from experience, which is superior to as entire a proof from experience as can possibly be imagined.*’ This deduction from the Author’s words, the reader will perceive, is strictly logical. What the meaning of it is, I leave to Mr. Hume to explain.”*

Sheltering himself under a conveniently intimated

* Dissertation on Miracles. Part I. Section 3.

determination to reply to no one who might think proper to take up the gauntlet as an opponent,—or rather, perhaps, I ought to say, to throw it down for Mr. Hume's acceptance,—the sceptical adversary of Christianity evaded the demand for any such explanation;—and was satisfied with flattering himself that, but for this resolution, he might have found something at least plausible, in his own defence. He would have found it no easy matter, however, to have met the arguments of such an antagonist. And I cannot but feel well assured, that, had he really seen any ground which he could have taken, capable of being rendered even sufficiently plausible,—so intense and settled was his hostility to revealed religion, that no such resolution would have proved strong enough to stand before it.—It is not easy to imagine what other principle than such hostility could dictate the sentences with which the above quotation of his hypothetical case of a credible miracle is introduced:—"I beg that these limitations may be remarked, when I say that a miracle can never be proved *so as to be the foundation of a system of religion*. For I own, that *otherwise*, there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony; though perhaps it will be impossible to find any such in all the records of history."—Now, why must miracles be excluded, and pronounced incapable of adequate attestation, as "the foundation" (the evidential support, that is)

“of a system of religion?” Why should they be admissible, and capable of proof “*otherwise*,” and not in such a connexion? One should have thought, that of all occasions for their introduction, the attestation of a system of religion—supposing men to have stood in need of one being divinely revealed—was the most natural and appropriate. To exclude them here, is to exclude the most important of all objects from the most appropriate of all proofs; to shut out God’s power, where, more than in any other imaginable case, his benevolence might be supposed to call for its interposition. Mr. Hume particularises no circumstances in which he conceives “there might possibly be miracles such as would admit of proof from testimony,”—no ends for which they might be admitted to have been wrought:—only it must not be for the one end for which alone the Scriptures represent them as ever having been wrought. The thoroughness of their authentication is a distinct question. That they are capable of such authentication, and actually have it, we hope to show:—our present observation simply is, that supposing them otherwise susceptible of proof, there cannot be a higher or a more likely end for which we can imagine them to have been performed, than the establishment of a divinely revealed religion; giving the assurance to men of what, more than any thing else whatever, it concerns them to know.

I shall conclude with a single remark on Mr. Hume’s alleged parallelism between his argument

against miracles and Tillotson's against the real presence—or transubstantiation. There is, in truth, between the two no parallelism whatever. The testimony of our senses is the strongest, argues Tillotson (in substance), of all our grounds of faith:—the doctrine of the real presence is contradicted by that testimony in its fullest extent,—all the senses together bearing witness against it:—so that no professed revelation which contained it could justly have claimed our faith; because the evidence of the truth of such a revelation never could have exceeded, if it could even have equalled, that of the falsity of this dogma.—But where is the parallelism between this and the argument of Mr. Hume? The only resemblance is, that in either case there is conceived to be evidence *against*, such as is necessarily stronger than the evidence *for*. But in the two cases, the *nature* of the evidence is entirely different; and, in one respect, not different only, but opposite. The evidence which, according to Hume, necessitates the rejection of miracles, and consequently of the Book which appeals to them, is the alleged *constancy of the laws of nature*:—the evidence which, according to Tillotson, necessitates the rejection of the dogma of transubstantiation, and consequently of any professed revelation which might contain it, is *the direct testimony of the senses*. The two are thus different. But, in one respect, I have said, they are even opposite. I mean, that the evidence which, in the one case, necessitates rejection, is the very evidence

to which, in the other, the appeal is made. In the case of transubstantiation, it is on the direct and united evidence of the senses that we disown it, and would disown the book that should contain it:—whereas, it is by that very evidence—the direct and united testimony of the senses—that the reality of miracles can alone be ascertained. Christianity, instead of testifying what, like transubstantiation, belies the senses, makes its appeal to the senses for the truth of what it does testify. *Miracles* were such an appeal. The appeal was made, when the Christian faith was introduced. And the sole question now is, whether the united testimony of the “*eye-witnesses*” of that appeal be a sufficient foundation for our credence in its reality. We have not the testimony of *our own* senses. How could we? The question is, whether the men of those days had the testimony of *theirs*:—it being, at the same time, borne in mind, that we have no such testimony of our senses *against* the miracles alleged to have been then wrought, as we have against the pretended miracle of transubstantiation. That miracle appeals to faith, in opposition to the senses:—the Christian miracles appeal to the senses, in support of faith.—Yet, were it at all within the scope of our present argument,—how easy it would be to demonstrate the wretched inconsistency of the professed believers in transubstantiation,—that *ne-plus-ultra* of priestly experimenting on human credulity, as well as of the omnivorousness of the appetite of that credulity!

They fancy their faith to rest on the Divine testimony ; and, on account of its very contrariety to the verdict of their senses, to be the purest and most meritorious of acts ;—while, poor creatures, it is resting on *sense*, after all :—the only difference between them and us, the presumptuous unbelievers of the dogma, being,—that they rest their faith on the testimony of *one only* of their senses against that of *all the five*,—while we rest our unbelief on the *united testimony of the whole*. For—apart altogether from the many gross and ludicrous absurdities produced by the literal interpretation of the words—“ This is my body ”—how know they that these words are in the Bible at all ? Is it not by *sight*, and by *sight alone* ? To the testimony of this one sense, then, must their boasted faith be traced,—(that is, in regard to the comparatively few who are permitted to put even that one sense in exercise,—for with regard to the vast majority, the existence of the words in the Bible must be taken on the authority of the priest) —and they credit the testimony of that one sense, in direct opposition to *itself* and to *all the rest* !—But this, only by the way. Transubstantiation is not our subject :—and, tempting, in different ways, as the field of discussion is, the temptation must be resisted.

CHAPTER IV.

CONCENTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR ARGUMENT ON THE ONE GREAT MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD.

HAVING, in last chapter, removed out of our way the celebrated argument of Mr. Hume,—(more celebrated than it ever deserved to be)—by which he endeavoured to show that no miracle could be rendered credible by any amount of testimony whatever;—I now proceed to bring to the test of the principles which, throughout the chapter, and especially toward the close of it, were laid down, respecting the distinctive characteristics of credible, incredible, and doubtful testimony,—to bring to the test of these principles the one grand miracle of THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE GRAVE.—As one of the results of our discussion of Hume's argument, we have seen what the true question is, which we have to determine; namely—not whether *testimony* is ever found false,—a point regarding which no question ever existed,—but whether SUCH testimony has ever proved false as that by which the gospel miracles,—or, still more definitely, as that by which

the one great fact just referred to—the resurrection of Christ—has been attested. We have ventured, and that very decisively, to affirm *the negative*; that no instance is to be found on record, of testimony characterized by such qualities and by such attendant circumstances having proved fallacious, and cheated our confidence.—Our next business then, is,—*to make good this affirmation*.—And in doing this, there are two fields of inquiry which lie before us:—*First,—the qualities and circumstances of the testimony*:—and *Secondly,—the nature of the evidence on which those by whom the testimony is given represent their own faith as having rested*.

We shall embrace both in the present chapter. The former, however, will necessarily occupy the larger space in our discussion.—We take up, then, in the *first place—the qualities and circumstances of the testimony to the fact of the resurrection*.

SECTION I.

REASONS FOR CONCENTRATION OF OUR ARGUMENT ON THIS ONE FACT:—EXPOSURE OF A SEEMING FALLACY IN THE ORDINARY TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECT:—ONE MORE POSTULATE ASSUMED—THE EARLY PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL NARRATIVE.

There are various reasons which induce me to prefer decidedly the confining of my argument to this one fact, rather than taking a wider range, and embracing the miracles generally, in all their multi-

plicity and variety, which are alleged to have been wrought for the establishment of the divine authority of Christianity. Not that this latter course is without its own special recommendations. It has not a few. My reasons of preference, however, are such as these:—

1. In the *first* place, the resurrection of Jesus is a *miracle*; and a miracle of the very highest order. The giving of life to the dead, comes fully up to the description of a “work which no man can do unless God be with him.” If, therefore, we can succeed in demonstrating the sufficiency of the evidence for *this one fact*, we shall have established our general principle, and made our ground secure as to all the rest.

2. In the *second* place, this plan will impart to our argument a greater degree of *concentration* and *unity*:—and this, without in the slightest degree departing from *fairness*, contributes materially to *clearness* and *precision*. The reasoning will, by this means, be more easily followed, and more distinctly understood.

3. *Thirdly*:—The resurrection of Christ is, in the Christian scheme, a *fact of fundamental importance*. The whole, indeed, may with truth be said to rest upon it. If this fact be established, then will there be established, with it, the divinity of his mission, the divine authority of his doctrines and precepts, and, at the same time, the certainty of all the other alleged miraculous evidence. If the reality

of this one miracle be made sure, little difficulty can remain as to the admission of any of the rest. I have no objection to stake the entire credit of the gospel revelation, and, by legitimate consequence, of the whole scriptures, on the reality of this one fact. If it did not take place, **ALL IS FALSE**: if it did, **ALL IS TRUE**. It is the corner-stone of the whole structure of Christianity:—and it is freely admitted, that, if any man could succeed in displacing that stone, he would succeed in bringing the entire fabric to ruin. To this fact, as a *future sign* of his divine commission, Jesus repeatedly referred those by whom, during his public life, his claims were questioned. And there is, as we shall by and by see, the clearest evidence, that by them the reference was distinctly understood.—And the words of the apostle Paul are tantamount to what we have admitted,—to placing the entire credit of his own testimony and that of his fellow-apostles upon the authenticity of this one fact:—“**IF CHRIST BE NOT RAISED, YOUR FAITH IS VAIN.**”*

In entering, then, on the discussion of this vital question, I would venture an observation, relative to a course of argument which has sometimes—frequently I might have said—been pursued, in support of the resurrection of Jesus,—and into which, indeed, we are very naturally apt to fall. It is a course, which, how logical and conclusive may be

* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

the reasoning itself, *on the assumption of the validity of its premises*,—has ever, I confess, appeared to me to involve a palpable fallacy in the principle on which it proceeds,—the principle, namely, of *this very assumption*.—Let me explain. You may hear persons argue,—and argue clearly, acutely, unobjectionably,—with admirable precision, and a force which cannot be rebutted,—*provided the truth be taken for granted of the ground on which the argument is framed*. But it so happens, that they are all the while founding their reasonings on facts and incidents, of which the authenticity rests on the very same testimony with that of the fact of the resurrection itself which it is their object to establish. The facts *from* which they reason, and the fact *to* which they reason, are both contained in the same narrative:—so that, if, on the authority of that narrative, we believe the former, on the same authority we should believe the latter. If we assume the authenticity of the record as the ground of our belief of the one; why should it not be also assumed as the ground of our belief of the other? In assuming the facts on which we base our argument, we have, *in principle*, assumed also the fact which the argument so based is meant to establish:—inasmuch as, we have assumed the authenticity of the record which contains them both, and which is the sole authority for either.—Let me illustrate my meaning by an example or two.

From certain circumstances in the evangelical

narrative, we draw the conclusion, that Jesus, when he is said to have "bowed the head and given up the ghost," *must have been really dead*; that there could, in *that* respect, be *no imposture*. The circumstances are such as these:—the dispensing, in his case, with the customary breaking of the legs to hasten death in consequence of its having been ascertained that he was "already dead;"—and the piercing of his side with the soldier's spear, of which the stab was decisively proved to have been mortal—even had death not previously taken place—by the issuing of the blood and the water from the region of the heart. These circumstances are recorded by the Evangelist John. And to these we add the further circumstance, mentioned by Mark, of the surprise of the Roman Governor on hearing that he was so soon dead, and his official examination into the fact.—Again:—from another fact it is usual to argue, that *there could be no substitution of one body for another, —and no resurrection, real or pretended, of any other than Jesus*;—the fact, namely, so explicitly stated by Luke, of Jesus having been the first and only individual that had been laid in the new tomb of Joseph.—Still further:—We evince the impossibility of any imposition having been effected, on the part of the disciples, *by the abstraction of their Master's body from the sepulchre*, by appealing to the various precautions which, on all hands and with such jealous care, were taken for complete security;—the stone, the guard of soldiers, and the

seal.—Lastly:—We point out *the contradictory absurdity of the story told by the soldiers of the Roman guard*,—(told in conformity with the instructions, and in return for the largesses, of the Jewish Rulers) —*about the disciples taking away the body during the night, while they (the soldiers) were asleep*. We allege,—and we allege truly—that for a Roman soldier to sleep on his post, was death;—that the improbability approaches to the impossible, that all of them, with the knowledge of this doom hanging over them, should have fallen on sleep at the same time, and should, moreover, have slept so very soundly, as not to have been disturbed, any one of them, by the efforts required for the removal of the great stone, and for the bringing out and carrying off of the body;—and that, if, on the one hand, they did *not* sleep, the body could not have been taken away,—and if, on the other, they *did* sleep, they could not, by their own confession, be competent witnesses of what took place while they were in a state that incapacitated them for observation:—and we add to all this the well-known timidity of the disciples, who had before forsaken their Master and fled, and who now kept themselves within bolted and barred doors “for fear of the Jews;” and infer the folly of imagining such men engaging in an attempt to steal away the corpse of their Master, in the face of a guard of armed soldiery.

Now, this is all very good. The argument is sound, and the conclusions are legitimate.—But

then—mark it:—all the particulars which form the basis of the reasoning, *are recorded in the same narrative which records the resurrection itself*. They may be said, most of them, to be parts of the very relation of that event.—Why, then, we may naturally and reasonably ask, all this argumentation? Why should we not, on the authority of the narrative, which we thus assume, accord our credence to the latter fact, as well as to the others?—In this, I repeat, there has ever appeared to me to lurk a fallacy.—I am sufficiently aware of what may be said in reply:—namely, that we may admit the trustworthiness of the evangelical narratives in regard to *common events*, or *facts of an ordinary character*, without admitting it in regard to such as are *miraculous*:—on the same principle on which we believe the events of the Roman history recorded by *Livy*, without attaching implicit credit, or any credit at all, to the *prodigies* which are mixed up with his narrative.—But the cases are as far as possible from being parallel. The narrative of *Livy* is an ordinary history, with now and then the occurrence of one of those prodigies of Pagan superstition that portended good or evil to the individual or to the state. The public life of Jesus, on the contrary, may be truly said to have been *made up of miracle*. It is not at all like a history of ordinary incidents, as in the other case, with here and there a prodigy, formally introduced, minutely detailed, pompously dilated upon, and asseverated true with notes of

wonderment. Of the evangelical narratives the ordinary and every-day actions and incidents are miracles. Take them away,—and what do you leave? And the supernatural doings of Him who is the subject of the narratives are related with even more of unvarnished and unpretending simplicity, than that with which, in other histories, the most ordinary incidents are told:—the writers appearing hardly conscious of any thing extraordinary and marvellous, even when putting upon record the most stupendous and astonishing parts of their story. Besides which, the ordinary and the miraculous are so blended together,—so interwoven with each other,—like the warp and the woof in the same tissue,—that it is impossible to regard them separately, or on any ground to uphold the authenticity of the one, while that of the other is denied. They can no more be severed, than the warp and the woof can be separated, and the texture remain. And in no one part of the narrative is this more remarkably the case, than in the particulars relative to the death and resurrection of Jesus.—At any rate, it would not be easy to rebut the objection of an infidel, were he, in regard to such reasonings as those we have just been specifying, to say—“*Establish the authenticity of the narrative, before you found your arguments on the very facts which it records.*”—This seems perfectly fair. Before we can reason from one fact to another fact, in the same narrative, it is manifest that we must first have ascertained the authenticity

of the narrative itself. When this has once been established, it will certainly follow, that such reasonings as have been exemplified will become sufficiently *valid*:—but then, in proportion as they become valid, they will, at the same time, become *unnecessary* and *superfluous*; inasmuch as, the establishment of the general authenticity of the Record lays an equally sure foundation for our direct belief of the fact it is our object to prove, as it does for our belief of the other facts from which we have been deriving our proof of it.

And this leads me to observe, that there is just one postulate which I now require, as the ground of my remaining argument. It is, the simple fact that the evangelical history was published, as we believe it to have been, *soon after the events narrated in it are alleged to have taken place,—within the period of the then existing generation.* According to my own apprehension of it, the conclusiveness of the proof in support of our Lord's resurrection *depends greatly—I might almost say exclusively, upon this one consideration.*—And to me, indeed, it has been matter of surprise, that infidels have not bent more of their ingenuity and effort toward this point. The truth is, they cannot fail to be sensible of their cause being, at this very point, *specially weak.* They are well aware that the principles by which they might attempt to involve in doubt the questions respecting the time when, and the persons by whom, the gospel narratives were given to the

world, are principles which would inevitably involve in doubt still greater the authors and the periods of the various works of antiquity, as to which neither they nor others are accustomed to entertain the slightest hesitation.—“There are,” it has been justly remarked, by a critic of high and well merited eminence, and a model of caution and candour so very rare as to entitle him to a place in a museum of character,—the late Dr. John Pye Smith,—“There are Heathen Books, well known, some of them belonging to the period of the New Testament, and others to times long before:—and no rational man doubts, that they were the real productions of the persons to whom they are attributed. But what is our evidence of this? How do we know the genuineness of the works of Thucydides, Xenophon, and Demosthenes among the Greeks, or of Cicero, Cæsar, and Livy among the Romans? I answer,—by the only evidence applicable in such cases, and with which the common sense of mankind is universally satisfied,—PUBLIC NOTORIETY, transmitted to the successive generations of men by their predecessors, up to the epoch in each case referred to:—and the transmitted knowledge often attested by the allusions and quotations of other authors. Thus the whole of literary history is continued down to our days. Upon such evidence as this it is, that we regard the Books composing the New Testament as genuine and authentic. They stand upon the ground of *public notoriety*, reaching back to the

times to which they belong. They have been referred to, quoted, and commented upon, by a succession of authors from those times downwards:—and they were translated, at very early periods, into the principal languages of the civilized world. The challenge may be fearlessly made, to produce any writers approaching to the same professed antiquity, whose genuineness is supported by evidence equally abundant and unexceptionable.”—And, if these observations hold true in regard to the books of the New Testament generally; they bear a special force of application to those portions of the sacred record with which alone we have at present to do,—*the Gospel Histories*. We have the universally concurrent voice of all antiquity, certifying the fact that the Gospel by Matthew was written and published within a few years after the time of our Lord’s alleged ascension.* To this fact infidels have never been able to oppose any thing better than idle unauthorised surmises:—surmises, of which, in an argument relative to the genuineness of the writings of any other authors, they would be utterly ashamed,

* Critics of eminence differ as to the date of the publication of Matthew’s Gospel. Their opinions vary, from *four* or *five* years after Christ’s death—the earliest date assigned to it—to about *thirty*—the latest. The probabilities are strong in favour of an early date:—but I dwell not on the question, for the obvious reason, that any of the dates between the earliest and the latest, and even the latest itself, will suffice for my argument.

—and which, indeed, they never, for one moment, would think of alleging; but would only laugh at the man who, by any suggestions of a similar nature, should attempt to shake their faith, as to any of one the acknowledged classics or historians of early times.

Without saying more, then, on a point admitting of expanded corroborative illustration, I may be allowed to assume, as a matter of fact, that *the Evangelical History—the history of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth—was given to the world within a few years after the events recorded in it are alleged to have taken place;—while the then existing generation lived.*

SECTION II.

HOW THE CASE STANDS:—WHAT WAS PUBLISHED:—IMPOSSIBILITY OF ITS FINDING CREDIT IN ONE MIND OR FOR ONE MOMENT, UNLESS TRUE.

Proceed we now, with as much brevity as may be consistent with the clear exposition of our argument, to consider how the case actually stands.—I might generalize the argument. I might take up the narrative in the gross, and demonstrate the utter impossibility of such a narrative obtaining credit even for a moment,—of its not being instantly put down,—of its not being laughed to scorn, or rejected with indignant reprobation, as a mass of forgery—a tissue, throughout, of falsehood and imposture,—if indeed it was not true. The entire

generation of living men and living women were witnesses to its untruth.—But, for the reasons already assigned, I confine myself at present to the one fact of the resurrection of Jesus, with its antecedent, concomitant, and subsequent circumstances.

Observe, then:—The following particulars are openly published to the world:—that Jesus of Nazareth, after a private life of thirty, and a public life of about three years' duration, and of which the wonderful incidents and transactions are narrated—some of them with minuteness of detail—as matters of public notoriety, “not done in a corner,” but in the presence of multitudes, day after day, in all parts of the country,—that this Jesus was betrayed by one of his twelve chosen followers into the hands of the Jewish priests and rulers,—and that by them the traitor was paid for his treachery thirty pieces of silver:—that, having been apprehended during the night by a band of men, expressly commissioned by them, and headed by Judas Iscariot the said traitor, in a garden which he was accustomed to frequent, with his select attendants, for devotion, and for rest from active engagements, he was hurried before two tribunals, and underwent examination by each,—first, that of the Jewish High Priest and council, and then that of Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor,—various extraordinary particulars being related respecting each examination:—that by the clamorous importunity of the leaders and people of the Jews, a sentence of condemnation against him was extorted

from Pilate;—the Judge himself, while he pronounced it, protesting openly against it, and “washing his hands before the multitude” in token of his being “innocent of the blood of that just person,” and charging it upon *them*; while they, with frantic outcries, imprecated upon themselves and their children the guilt and consequences of the deed:—that, after being subjected to many public indignities and cruelties, he was crucified on Mount Calvary, between two malefactors, in presence of an immense concourse of spectators:—that during three hours of the time he hung upon the cross, a supernatural darkness covered the land, and that, at the moment of his bowing his head, with a loud voice declaring his work finished, and surrendering his spirit to God, the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, and many graves were opened, and yielded up their dead:—that, in compliance with a request made to Pilate, his body was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea, accompanied by Nicodemus,—both members of the Jewish council, but dissenting from the proceedings against Jesus,—and was laid in the tomb of the former,—of which the locality and the nature are particularly specified:—that the Jewish priests and rulers applied to the Governor for a guard of Roman soldiers, to watch the sepulchre, and prevent the possible imposture of a pretended resurrection; the plea for such precaution being the previous intimation during his life by him whom they had just put to death, that “after three days he should rise

again:"—that the Governor granted them their request:—that the guard was duly posted, and that the stone which had been placed by Joseph at the entrance of the burial-vault was carefully sealed for the greater security:—that on the morning of the third day from his crucifixion, he did rise, with accompanying circumstances of divine interposition, such as filled even the brave soldiers of the Roman Legion with deadly terror:—that after his alleged resurrection, some of the soldiers of this guard carried to the chief priests and rulers a report of what had happened:—that, in consequence, a special convocation of the authorities was summoned; and that by them the soldiers were bribed with a large sum of money, and a story put into their mouths which they were to tell, so as to cover up the truth:—and that the said story was in common currency among the Jewish people at the time when the evangelical history was published.

The whole of this extraordinary account is published,—with all the artless simplicity of historical narration;—published during the life of the generation among whom the incidents are alleged to have taken place, and to have taken place recently;—and published, without the slightest symptom, on the part of the narrators, of any apprehension that the facts might be questioned.

Our inquiry, then, is—WERE THESE STATEMENTS LIES?—WAS THE NARRATIVE A FICTION?—And to this question the general *primâ facie* answer is—

what must present itself to every reader's mind instantly and irresistibly,—that if the statements *were* lies, if the narrative *was* a fiction, the lies and the fiction were of such a nature as to be—I was about to say *capable of* immediate and certain detection and exposure; but the phrase would be by much too feeble:—they were not merely capable of such detection and exposure,—they could not, by any imaginable possibility, escape it.—They were lies, recollect, which those whose characters were implicated in them (and implicated they were in no ordinary degree) could not but feel the very strongest conceivable inducement to contradict and put down, had it been at all in their power to do so. But in truth there could have existed no occasion for their resorting to any means of any kind for such a purpose:—their very statement was their refutation. All parties whatever, from the Jewish High Priest and the Roman Governor to the least and lowest of the people, must have known that such things never had taken place.

And yet, we have not done.—A short while after, *another* historical document makes its appearance—the Book of THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.—That document—avowedly from the pen of one of those who had previously published the narratives of Christ's life,—contains an account of a most extraordinary event, said to have happened a few weeks after his alleged ascension to heaven, and by which that ascension, and the power with which he had been

invested there, were attested and proved:—I mean, the wonderful scenes recorded in the second chapter (speaking according to our modern subdivisions) of that Book, as having taken place on the first subsequent *Pentecost*, one of the great public annual festivals of the Jews; and, consequently, in presence of an immense concourse of that people, gathered together from all quarters of the known world:—all of whom are there related to have heard, with the utmost astonishment, those “ignorant and ordinary men,” the eleven apostles, address them, in the public streets of Jerusalem, “in their own tongues, wherein they were born;”—the various places, nearer and more remote, from which they had been convened, being enumerated.—Another question, then, arises—*was the scene there described a fabrication too?*—If it was, the reader must again be sensible, that the whole, or almost the whole, of the then existing generation were living witnesses of its falsehood. They could not but know, and know with the most assured certainty, that no such things as those related had ever taken place.—And while, as already observed, there existed every conceivable motive to the detection and exposure of the imposition,—there was, at the same time, on the part of those whom these motives must chiefly have influenced, all power and all means for effecting the detection and exposure,—had such power and means been, in such a case, at all requisite. But this case, like the former, must have stood forth

either to public execration, or public contempt, or both,—as one, which, if a forgery at all, bore the most palpable impress of forgery in the eyes of the entire nation of the Jews, and of all the strangers who mingled with them.

That in such circumstances then, the imposture *never was detected and exposed* ought, of itself, to be a sufficient ground of assurance to us that there was no imposture in the case for such detection and exposure; and so to warrant our attaching full credence to the facts.

SECTION III.

FURTHER GROUNDS OF CREDIBILITY:—NATURE OF THE TESTIMONY:—KIND OF EVIDENCE REQUIRED:—NUMBER AND QUALIFICATIONS OF THE WITNESSES:—PROOFS OF THEIR SINCERITY.

But we are far from yet having done.—We request the reader to take further into account such considerations as the following:—

1. The evidence, it is at once admitted, on which we believe the great fact of Christ's resurrection, is the evidence of TESTIMONY:—but it ought not to be forgotten, that this is *the only description of evidence* which, in such a case, it is, in the nature of the thing, *possible for us to have*. The resurrection is *a fact*. It is not by any process of moral or metaphysical reasoning, nor by any chain of mathematical demonstration, that a simple matter of fact

can be ascertained to us. When it has not been within the cognizance of our own senses, this can only be effected by the concurrent testimony of a sufficient number of competent witnesses; witnesses who have had sufficient opportunities of knowing what they testify, and who give full proof of disinterestedness and integrity in the testimony they bear.—Nothing can well be more unreasonable, (as in our introductory remarks we had occasion to notice) than, in any case, to demand and insist upon evidence different *in kind* from that of which alone, from its nature, the case admits. While by metaphysical and ethical reasonings we establish moral principles, and by mathematical demonstrations problems in geometry, it is *on testimony alone* that we can rest our faith in *facts*,—facts which we have not ourselves witnessed.

2. The subject of the testimony being a simple matter of fact, cognizable by the senses, and by the senses alone,—the witnesses of it, who were to attest it to others, required no more, for qualifying them to ascertain its reality, than these two things—*the healthy condition and proper use of their senses*,—and *sufficient opportunity to use them*. The point to which their testimony relates, is not at all any deep, abstruse, metaphysical doctrine, requiring powers of research and discrimination to elicit, and such as could be reasoned out to the satisfactory conviction of others, only by a process of intricate and difficult argumentation;—or in the representa-

tion of which there was room for misapprehension and mistake. It was a plain matter of fact, of which every one, having his eyes and other senses in a sound state, was competent to judge.

3. These things being so, let us now briefly notice *the different circumstances which concur to impart credibility to the testimony of the witnesses of THIS fact.*—They are such as these:—

In the FIRST place,—their NUMBER.—There was not one witness only, or even two, or three; there were many. Without taking at present any higher ground, I confine myself to *the Apostles—the eleven Apostles*. The early spread of Christianity by their agency is a matter of historical fact, attested by evidence independent of the authority of their own books. Who will venture to question that there were such men as the apostles, and that by them the gospel began to be propagated?—Beginning, then, on the lowest ground, we may put the question—Is it, on the first aspect of the case, at all likely, or credible, that so large a number should not only concur in the invention of such a falsehood,—but that they should have had every thing so minutely and thoroughly digested as never, in any one particular, to contradict, or cross, or thwart each other; that they should all hold out in perfect harmony,—never falling out among themselves; and that they should all to a man remain proof to the very last against all the resources of power, and art, and persuasion, and bribery, and intimidation, on the

side of the enemies of their cause? Considering all the circumstances, no one will venture to say that these things were reasonably to be expected; seeing, especially, there had already been a traitor among the twelve.

On the subject of the *number* of the witnesses, it may just be mentioned, how unreasonable a thing it is to put such questions as—Why were there not *others*? Why were there not *more*? Why did not Jesus appear *publicly* after his rising? All such questions, it is very obvious, are utterly irrelevant. Our sole inquiry behoves to be—*Is the actually existing evidence sufficient*? Take it as it stands—is it *enough*?—The questions, however, having been asked, a moment's notice of them may be proper.

With regard, then, to the witnesses actually chosen,—the plain and palpable reason for the selection of *them* rather than of others,—the very best reason in the world, surely,—was that *they were the most thoroughly qualified to attest the fact*.—Such is the rational principle represented as proceeded upon in the election of a successor to Judas: Acts i. 21, 22.—“Wherefore, of these men who have companied with us all the while that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”—Had others been chosen, we may be well assured, the deficiency of qualification would not have escaped the lynx-eyed

and malign perspicaciousness of infidelity. Sceptics would have been the very first to mark and to expose it, with the eagerness of argument, and the bitterness of derision.—We may further remark,—that a host of witnesses who were *not* thoroughly competent to bear testimony, could have served no other purpose than to bring discredit upon the depositions of the few that *were*. All of them would have been grouped together under this common character—the character of persons, who, even how trustworthy soever they might be in regard to *principle*, were otherwise incompetent. The same thing holds in regard to *witnesses*, as in regard to *arguments*. When a reasoner brings forward an array of petty, insignificant, and questionable proofs, he inevitably produces in the hearer's or the reader's mind, in proportion as he does so, a deduction from the force of such as are really to the point and conclusive. He begets a suspicion of the firmness of his own conviction,—and weakens the impression of truth in the minds of those whom he aims to convince.—The military commander, it is naturally concluded, cannot repose much confidence in his main body, who discovers such anxious eagerness to muster and bring into the field a legion of feeble auxiliaries. So in argument. The reasoner who acts such a part gives an advantage to the subtile adversary; who lays hold of all the weak points, and easily exposes their futility; and he thus, in the judgments of the inconsiderate, obtains a tri-

umph, when in truth he has gained no victory.—In addressing the household of Cornelius, the apostle Peter is represented as saying:—"Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly,—not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."—If any be disposed to ask—Why not to all the people?—has not this selection of witnesses a suspicious appearance?—is it not apt to engender the jealous surmise, that, instead of being chosen *by God*, such witnesses were chosen by themselves and their confederates?—What has already been said might serve as a sufficiently satisfactory reply to all such questions. The following considerations, however, may be added.

In the *first* place:—The mere *negation of more proof* does not, in the very slightest degree, *affect the validity of the proof which exists*. The *no-evidence* of those who did *not* see him after he rose cannot, in the least, invalidate the *positive evidence* of those who *did*. The negation, in such a case, is, strictly and literally, *nothing*. It has no more influence on the positive testimony, than the subtraction of a series of ever so many ciphers from a given sum.

In the *second* place:—It should be borne in mind, that, in regard to whatever witnesses might be chosen to attest the fact, the opportunity by which they were rendered competent so to attest it behoved to have been *two-fold*:—*previous intimacy* was as indispensable as *subsequent intercourse*, and

subsequent intercourse as previous intimacy. It is very evident, that no kind and no amount of intercourse *after* his resurrection could qualify any one to be a witness, without intimate acquaintance with him *before* it. And the converse is, if possible, even more clear,—that no kind or amount of previous intimacy could have been of any avail in qualifying a witness, without adequate opportunity afterwards of ascertaining the actual return to life of the same person,—of determining his personal identity. This previous intimacy was possessed by the twelve,—not by the multitude. Even ever so many appearances of a public nature could have been of little avail to those who were not, by the previous intimacy, fitted for judging of this identity.

In the *third* place:—There was requisite something more than even *both* of these; than both previous intimacy and subsequent opportunity of recognition. It is the acute observation of a powerful reasoner—Bishop Horsley—that over and above these, it was necessary that the witnesses should be *well known by others* to have possessed these qualifications; to have both enjoyed previous intimacy and subsequent means of satisfying themselves, with full assurance, of the reality of the fact.—They were not merely, be it remembered, to be satisfied *for themselves*—they were to attest the fact to others—to mankind: and, in order to give others the requisite confidence in their testimony, it was indispensable that they should be thus known as having been the

intimate associates of Him, to whose reappearance after his death, they were to give their solemn and conscientious attestation. It would never have been satisfactory, that this their intimacy with him should depend upon their own testimony. That would have made the proof of the *evidence* the same with the proof of the *fact* which the evidence was meant to establish!—It required to be a matter of public and unquestionable notoriety. A public appearance, among crowds of persons whose knowledge of him was so various in degree,—and of whom the large proportion would have been utterly* incapable of bearing any distinct and explicit testimony, could have served no end but that of producing perplexity and confusion, like that respecting the blind man in the ninth chapter of John;—some saying, “This *is* he;”—others—“He is *like* him;” and leaving it—(which, in such a case, would surely have been as far as possible from satisfactory) to his own testimony—“*I am* he”—to determine the point. “The demand,” says the authority I have referred to, “of frequent public exhibitions of the person is the demand of folly, not perceiving the distinction between a just proof by which a fact may be established, and those vague reports, which every one adopts and no one owns,—which serve only to multiply doubt, and to propagate uncertainty.”*

* Horsley's Sermons on the evidence of our Lord's resurrection—p. 185.

On the degree of publicity with which he actually *did* appear after his resurrection I do not dwell; because it is a circumstance which does not at all affect the point before us—which is the credibility of the actual witnesses. One remark only I would offer. Paul, in one of his letters—his first to the Corinthians,—speaks of one well-known appearance to “above five hundred brethren at once;” and he makes his appeal to the “greater part” of that large company as surviving at the time of his writing:—and my one remark is—that such an appeal is itself a strong corroboration of the reality of the fact;—inasmuch as, who in his senses would have ventured on a reference to such a number of still living witnesses, unless he had had a perfect confidence of truth?—In addition to the *number* of the witnesses I now observe—

In the SECOND place:—They were men UTTERLY INCAPABLE OF CONTRIVING AND CONDUCTING SUCH A PLOT AS THE ALLEGED IMPOSTURE SUPPOSES.—Not according to their own account of themselves merely, but according to the concurrent testimony of all antiquity, they were *plain unlettered men*—chiefly fishermen from the lake of Gennesaret or the Sea of Galilee,—respecting whom we have no reason to suppose they were at all superior, in natural or acquired endowments, to our own fishermen on the banks of the Forth or the Clyde. And what I wish at present to be noted is—the wonderful simplicity and artlessness of their own account of

the matter. It is deeply interesting to observe it. According to that account, the death and resurrection of their Master *formed no part at all of their plan*. It was, as they themselves assure us, quite out of their calculation. They represent themselves as having, by his death, been utterly disconcerted,—as by an event entirely out of the line of their anticipations and hopes. “They trusted,” they tell us, with an impress of honesty above all affectation,—“They trusted it had been He who should have redeemed Israel;”—language showing how strongly, in their minds, his death had shaken that trust. And with the same artless simplicity, they record their own ignorance:—“For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he should rise again from the dead.”

From this we argue as follows:—If, on the one hand, they were *not* really disconcerted by his death, —if they actually expected it,—and the pretence of his resurrection was a part of their previously arranged plan,—then, *why should they have represented themselves as so disconcerted?* It is not the ordinary manner of impostors purposely and gratuitously to bring their own sagacity into discredit.—And if, on the other hand, they actually *were* disconcerted; this itself, surely, is no very flattering evidence of their having possessed such penetration and foresight,—such readiness of resource,—such ingenuity and promptitude of artifice,—as to bring the supposition within the limits of the credible, that, instantly on

his unanticipated death occurring, they took advantage of their own disappointment,—turned to good account what in fact had mortified and chagrined them,—and redeemed their stupid error, and remedied the frustration of their wishes,—by introducing at the instant of exigency, and successfully getting up and carrying out, the plan of a pretended resurrection. The infidel who should believe this, ought not to taunt believers with credulity.

In the **THIRD** place:—The witnesses of this fact **HAD NO MOTIVE OF INTEREST** in affirming and persisting to affirm it;—**NO ADVANTAGE**, enjoyed or in prospect, to induce them to such a course:—but, on the contrary, the affirmation of it brought upon them, and continued through life to bring upon them, **A LARGE AMOUNT AND VARIETY OF PRIVATIONS AND SUFFERINGS**.—I must be allowed to assume, as a matter of indubitable historical fact, that the first witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus were subjected to evils—both privative and positive—numerous, diverse, and severe;—the loss of reputation, of property, of friends, of liberty, of corporeal soundness, of life itself. They were the objects of scorn, and the victims of rage. They were reprehended, threatened, imprisoned, scourged, stoned, tortured, and put to death in every form of cruelty which diabolical malice could invent: and all this, besides the natural evils to which they voluntarily exposed themselves in their Master's and their mission's cause—dangers and fatigues, hunger and thirst,

cold and nakedness. In the face of all these evils,—evils from which flesh and blood instinctively shrink,—and to which no sane man will voluntarily subject himself, but either under the power of some strong unconquerable conviction, or in the expectation of some valuable compensatory benefit,—in the face of them all, they persisted in bearing their testimony to their Master's resurrection.

Dr. Paley enlarges greatly on the *previous probabilities* that the witnesses should incur suffering. He does this, with what might seem an almost superfluous prolixity. His object, however, it should be remembered, is, not to bring these forward as indirect evidences of the fact;—it is to show, that the Apostles must have *entered on their career with the sure anticipation* of such suffering. They themselves represent their Master as having forewarned them of it. All that followed verified his premonitions. His sufferings certified theirs. And the prospect was rendered all the surer by what they knew, and saw exemplified, of the rooted prejudices and proud passions of their countrymen, and especially of their priests and rulers.—It was not possible, that they should not have foreseen and calculated upon the consequences. The disciple was to be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. What they testified they knew well to be obnoxious, in the very highest degree, to the people in general, and to the men in power in particular. If Jesus of Nazareth was indeed risen from the dead,

—then were his claims to the Messiahship fully substantiated. He was proved to be indeed the Anointed of Jehovah, the promised and expected King of Israel. The towering hopes of their worldly pride and ambition were thus thrown down, and buried in the dust. The tomb which He had left became the ingulphing grave of them all. And, last and worst of all, they themselves were found to have been “fighting against God,” and were held forth to the world as the convicted murderers of the “Prince of life.”—These were consequences and charges, such as were not to be submitted to in silence. They were such as, if false, those who were implicated in them could not fail to have keenly felt and resented,—and to have left no means untried to bring to merited punishment their unprincipled and infamous propagators.—And of all this these propagators could not but have been previously and certainly aware. They set out, therefore, in their career, with their eyes open to the consequences :—and, having so set out, they persisted in maintaining the truth of their testimony, and in enduring, on account of it, these anticipated results, *to the very uttermost.*

Look now, then, calmly and dispassionately, at the state of the case.—First of all, as we have repeatedly noted, that which they attested was no mere *opinion*, or *doctrine*, which they might *think true*, although it was really false :—it was *a fact* ; and a fact of such a description, that, if it was

false, they could not but have *known it to be so*. This we shall more clearly demonstrate immediately. —Then, it will surely be admitted to be an utter outrage on all the common principles and feelings of our nature, to suppose men,—to suppose even *one* man, and much more a number of men,—thus to relinquish good, and encounter evil,—evil in the form both of privations and sufferings, numerous, severe, and pertinaciously inflicted,—in attestation of what they *knew to be false*.—We might stop here; and challenge the production of any parallel case. But this is not all. There is an illusion which we must remove. These witnesses, while they suffered for their testimony, may by some be hastily and inconsiderately supposed to have been sustained in so suffering, by the hope of a more than ample compensation for all that they could be called to endure, in a future and better world. But there could not be a greater mistake. On the supposition of their testimony being true, and of their believing and knowing it to be true, the sentiment would be a sound one. But if it was false,—and they knew it to be false,—their own doctrine pronounced their sentence for the world to come. According to that doctrine, they had nothing to anticipate there, as convicted impostors,—conscious liars,—and liars in the name of the God of truth,—liars who “made God a liar,”—but “the damnation of hell.” We have not to search for proofs of this. Their own writings abound with them. Their doctrine was, that “all

liars have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone:”—and if, as to any, there be a speciality, it must surely be as to *such* liars. Every thing in their writings,—their entire pervading spirit,—is in harmony with this exclusion from the kingdom above of “whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”—What, then, have we here? We have a number of men, combining to publish as a fact, what they could not but know to be a falsehood,—and all resolutely and perseveringly persisting in so publishing it:—and *for the sake of what*? All deceivers have some end in view—some desirable end—which by the success of their imposture, they expect to attain. What, then, was the object here?—what honours—what emoluments—what earthly advantages and benefits? Nothing of the kind. They voluntarily suffer all, for the sake of—the forfeiture of all the good on which men in general set their hearts, and the endurance of evils from which human nature sensitively recoils, and to which no man in a sound mind would expose himself, if by possibility he could help it; while, at the same time, in the very doctrine which they promulgate in connexion with the alleged fact, they doom themselves to everlasting destruction—to “the pains of hell for ever”—in the world to come!

We hear a great deal, in such discussions as the present, of *the laws of nature*. But it is too often forgotten, that there are laws of nature in the moral and intellectual department of creation, as well as

in the physical. There are, especially, laws of *human* nature ; and there are laws of *sensitive* nature. And we are confident there is no extreme of boldness in affirming, that such a case as the one now supposed, assuming for argument's sake the possibility of it, would be as extraordinary a departure from *these* laws, as any miracle can be from the laws of matter and motion in the material universe. A miracle is a suspension or violation of the laws of nature. But to suppose such a case as the one described, is to suppose the suspension and violation of all the laws and principles of the constitution of *man's* nature. And if these laws are to be determined at all *by experience*, we are not too bold, I repeat, when we say, that there is not an analogous case to be found in the entire records of human history.—*Testimony* has often deceived us:—SUCH testimony never did, and never could deceive us.—Mr. Hume himself, in his Essay on Liberty and Necessity, not only admits, but labours to prove, that “in many cases, we may argue as surely and strongly from the power and influence of motives on the human mind, as from the influence of physical causes; and that there is as great a certainty, and as necessary a connexion, in what are called moral causes, as in physical.”—Now, we cannot but be struck with the extreme inconsistency of the philosopher, in the admissions made by him on one subject, compared with his reasonings on another. For few things can be more clear, than that, had he only, with an

ordinary measure of candour, applied the sentiment just cited from his own writings, to the testimony of the witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, he could not have resisted the conclusion, but must himself have become a believer,—a believer of *the fact*, and, as a consequence, a believer of *Christianity* as being in its truth or falsehood identified with it.

I have only to add, FOURTHLY—but without at all enlarging on its illustration,—that THE LIVES OF THE WITNESSES WERE NOT LIVES OF LICENTIOUS PROF-LIGACY—were not at all SUCH LIVES AS TO AFFORD ANY GROUND WHATEVER FOR SUSPECTING THEIR INTEGRITY.—They were lives, as none can venture to dispute, of purity, and virtue, and generous self-denial; lives quite of a piece with the doctrines and precepts which, in God's name, they delivered. They were not men who “walked after their own lusts” while they “made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.” They could not, therefore, be actuated by any motives of *that* description:—and the entire general character of the men, and their course of life,—to which they themselves make their open and fearless appeal, an appeal which is borne out by the traditionary testimony of all antiquity,—utterly belies the supposition of their having spent their lives in the attestation to mankind of a known lie, in the name, and with the pretended authority, of the God of truth.

Such considerations as these, then, put the

testimony of the witnesses beyond suspicion, in as far as their *sincerity* is concerned. Beyond all question, they were not *intentional deceivers,—conscious and open-eyed impostors and liars.*—WERE THEY, THEN, THEMSELVES DECEIVED? Such is the question to which we now proceed.

SECTION IV.

SINCERITY OF THE WITNESSES ALREADY PROVED:—THEIR OWN ACCOUNT OF THE GROUNDS OF THEIR FAITH:—SUFFICIENCY OF THESE, AND INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF THEIR TRUTH.

Our first observation here is:—that the same evidence which has satisfied us of their sincerity cannot fail to satisfy us also of the further position,—that, before they would have ventured upon, and persisted in, such a course as has been described, THEY MUST HAVE HAD EVIDENCE OF THE GREAT FACT THEY WERE TO TESTIFY VERY THOROUGHLY SATISFACTORY TO THEIR OWN MINDS.—Mark, then, how, in *this* respect, the case stood. First of all, let it not slip from the reader's mind,—for in every step of our present argument the remembrance of it is essential,—that the subject of their testimony was not *an opinion*, but *a fact*; and a fact coming under the immediate cognizance of their own senses. Along with this, let it be kept in mind, that, on the various grounds stated and illustrated, we have ascertained their *sincerity*. If these men were not in earnest,—calmly and deliberately in earnest,—the conclu-

sion must be, that in no case whatever is it possible for us to have satisfactory proof of human integrity. If, then, we consider the point of their *sincerity* as sufficiently ascertained, it will follow, that WE ARE WARRANTED TO TAKE THEIR OWN ACCOUNT OF THE EVIDENCE BY WHICH THEY BECAME CONVINCED OF THE FACT WHICH THEY ATTESTED. This evidence they published. It was necessary for them to do this,—even had there been no other reason for their doing it, than to vindicate themselves from the imputation of folly and madness.—I feel it necessary to press this view of the matter upon the reader's attention; because otherwise I might appear to be forgetting myself, and to be violating in my own practice the principle on which I set out,—the principle, namely, of not making the other facts of the very narrative which contains the record of the one to be proved, *the basis of the proof of it*;—and thus to be falling into the very fallacy to which, in the opening of my argument on the resurrection, I adverted. I am not doing this. I am not proceeding now on the assumption of the authenticity of the narratives. I am only assuming, on the ground of the sincerity of the witnesses having been satisfactorily settled, that *the evidence on which their own conviction rested has been fairly and honestly stated by them*. It will at once be perceived, that this does not even amount to an assumption of the said evidence having been *sufficient*:—it only ascertains to us *what they deemed sufficient*.—Another postulate, then, I require,—and

it will not surely be regarded as an unreasonable one,—namely, that, the fact attested being one which could be ascertained by no other description of evidence than that of the senses,—and this evidence, in union with a sound understanding, being sufficient,—the witnesses *had their bodily senses in good condition, and were in a state of mental sanity.*—What, then, we now ask, is their own account of the evidence on which they rested their belief of the fact, and confidently, earnestly, and perseveringly attested it to their fellow-men?

It consisted of *two parts*; both of which, as before stated, were equally indispensable:—

1. That they had long, intimate, familiar acquaintance with their Master, *previously to his death, and up to the time of his death.* They had associated with him constantly for three years. They knew him, in every feature of his countenance, and every member of his frame,—in every attitude, every gesture, every look, every tone of voice,—in every particular by which it is conceivable that personal identity can be ascertained:—and, having thus known him, there was no interval of subsequent separation to weaken their impressions, or obscure their reminiscences of him.—Suppose our most intimate friend to die;—to die, not by a lingering and wasting process of dissolution, but by a sudden death,—in his full strength, without tedious emaciation, or aught that could induce any alteration in

his ordinary appearance:—suppose him to continue dead from Friday afternoon till Sabbath morning, —and then to appear to us—not in vision, but really and corporeally, his *bonâ fide self*:—is it possible, think you, that in so short a time we could have so forgotten him, as to be, even in the slightest degree, at a loss to recognize him, and to be sure of his identity?—Such, then, according to the account of the witnesses, was *their* case:—there was *full knowledge of their Master previously*, and there was *no time to forget him*.—Then—

2. According to their account,—*the fullest opportunity was afforded to them subsequently, for assuring themselves of his identity*. Their own historian says, “he showed himself alive to them *by many infallible proofs*.” A number of these are particularly detailed by the different evangelists:—and of others it is said, more generally—“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:—but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his Name.”—They saw him; they looked intently upon him; they heard him, and conversed with him; they handled him, at his own desire,—so as to know by feeling that it was no spirit, but a body of flesh and bones,—and that that body retained, in its hands, and feet, and side, the marks of the wounds which had, in death, been inflicted upon it by the nails

and the soldier's spear;—they saw him take food, and eat before them, and they ate and drank along with him.—There is no occasion for dilating on the various particulars. The simple statement of them is, for our present purpose, enough.—We have ascertained them to have been *sincere* in the conviction avowed and published by them:—and such was the evidence by which they openly declared their conviction to have been produced. Their subsequent conduct made it fully apparent, that to themselves it had been thoroughly and irresistibly satisfactory:—and, assuredly, taking it as stated by them, it could not fail to have been so. I at once admit, that suffering, even to martyrdom, and that in its cruellest forms, is no direct evidence of *truth*. But by no one will it be questioned, that in all cases, it is the most direct and unequivocal evidence it is possible for us to have of the *sincerity* of the sufferer. Having, then, the clearest proofs of such sincerity in the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, we may conceive ourselves to address them after this manner:—"We are satisfied—thoroughly satisfied—that you believe the fact you testify. We ask you, then, what are the grounds on which your belief of it rests?—what is the evidence you have had of its reality?"—And it is clear, that the same proof which gives us the assurance of their sincerity in their professed belief of the fact, should, to the same amount, give us assurance of like sincerity in stating the grounds on which they

did believe it. When a man is previously aware—and this we saw they could not fail to have been—that the publication of a particular fact is inevitably to expose him to suffering and to loss; then, in proportion to the measure of privative and positive evil he has reason to apprehend as the consequence of his doing so,—is it reasonably to be expected that he will be jealous and inquisitive about the evidence;—that he will scrutinize it with closeness and care;—that he will not rashly commit himself, but make himself very sure of his ground, before he comes forward, and sets himself spontaneously to a work which he sees to be so full of peril,—so sure of subjecting him to the exasperations of malice and ill-will,—and of bringing with it so large a variety and accumulation of the ills from which nature shrinks. Nothing, it must in all candour be admitted, could have induced the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus to act the part they did, but the most assured conviction, resting on evidence which they felt to be such as they could neither “gainsay nor resist.” With the full impression upon their minds of their responsibility to the God of truth and righteousness,—to whom all lying is hateful, and none more so than lying in his own Name,—they said—“Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye:—for **WE CANNOT BUT SPEAK THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.**”

We have thus endeavoured,—satisfactorily to our

own mind, and we trust no less so to the mind of the reader,—to make good the two points,—that the apostles—the witnesses of this great miracle, the resurrection of Jesus—were not, and could not be, *impostors*, palming upon the world a *known* lie;—and that they were not, and could not be, *themselves imposed upon*, and cheated into the *belief* of a lie. And I close this part of my argument in the words of one of the princes of theological literature, and (with all his faults) in justly high repute for controversial acumen and power:—"If any human testimony," says Bishop Horsley, "ever attained the certainty of demonstration, it is in this instance of our Lord's resurrection; which is established with far greater certainty by the evidence of the apostles, than any other fact in the whole compass of history, sacred or profane."

A single remark or two I may be allowed on the connexion, as set forth by the Apostle Paul, between this great fact of the resurrection of Jesus and the truth of Christianity. I refer to the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. Some, it would appear, among the Christians in Corinth had been tempted (we need not inquire how) to deny the doctrine of a future resurrection of the dead. They do not seem to have been at all sensible that by such denial they were laying the axe to the root of Christianity; conceiving, it may be, that if they held by the doctrine of a future state of conscious existence, independently of the resurrection of the

body,—the claims of the gospel were safe. The Apostle shows them their mistake. He makes two suppositions; and then he draws his conclusion. The *first* is—“*If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:*”—and the *second* is—“*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain:—ye are yet in your sins:—and then they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*” We ask, then—how follows the former sequence—“if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised?” Among other grounds, we answer, upon these two:—*first*—if the denial of the future resurrection of the dead was rested on its alleged *impossibility*,—then, of course, Christ could not have risen; seeing his rising must have been just as impossible as the rising of any others:—and *secondly*—the future resurrection of the dead—of all the dead—was a doctrine expressly taught by Christ:—so that, if there never was to be any such event, he had been a teacher, in God’s Name, of what was false—of what had no authority from Him,—and therefore could never, by his own resurrection, have had God’s seal attached to his commission and his message.—And then, as to the latter of the two conclusions, it is of so serious a character as to show, clearly and impressively, the value of our present argument:—“And, if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain;—ye are yet in your sins; and they who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.”—Paul’s meaning is plain. Christ’s death was the atonement for sin. So he had represented it in the immediately preced-

ing context:—"I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand:—by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory" (rather, if ye '*hold fast*,' in *faith* as well as in memory) "what I preached unto you:—unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,—and that he was buried,—and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."—And he then proceeds to show them, that if the dead were not to rise, they must have "believed in vain;" for that, in that case, their faith was faith of what *was not true*,—of what had *no attestation of divine authority*.—The Gospel is not the mere fact that *Christ died*, but that he died *for our sins*. The propitiatory character of that death constitutes, according to this apostle, the very essence of the gospel, or scheme of Christian truth. Now, Christ's rising from the dead was to be the proof of the divine acceptance of the propitiation. The sequence, therefore, was immediate and irresistible—"if Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins"—still under their uncanceled, because unatoned, guilt. The principle is—NO RESURRECTION—NO ATONEMENT. The proof of the propitiation failing, the propitiation itself fails. They, therefore, who had "fallen asleep in Christ"—who had died in the faith of this propitiation—"were perished." Their hope had proved a delusion; seeing the faith on which it

was founded had been the belief of a lie. And there was nothing in prospect for themselves, and for the race of mankind, but the reaping of the wages of sin—"the second death"—perdition.

Such, in the estimate of this apostle, is the fundamental importance of the fact whose evidence we have been discussing. Is the inference, then, which I would have my reader draw from this—that he should not be over-scrupulous, and inquisitively particular, about the proofs of what it is so very desirable to find true,—but should rather yield to it a ready and credulous assent? Precisely the reverse. Our earnest admonition to every reader is,—that thoroughly and throughout he sift every "jot and tittle" of the evidence:—that he probe it all to the very bottom:—that he take nothing on trust. Only let his sifting and probing be *candid*, as well as complete. If it be, we have no apprehension of the result.

CHAPTER V.

RETURN TO MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT GENERALLY:—PRINCIPLE OF OUR ARGUMENT APPLIED TO THEM:—THE MIRACLES THEMSELVES NEVER DENIED:—SUPPOSED POWERS OF AGENTS INFERIOR TO GOD:—ESPECIALLY OF EVIL SPIRITS:—OBJECTIONS ON SUCH GROUNDS ANSWERED.

I NOW return to a more general view of the New Testament miracles,—those especially recorded to have been wrought by Christ himself. For reasons before assigned, I have selected, for special consideration, the one grand miracle of the resurrection. And if we have succeeded in establishing the reality of *it*, we have established the truth of Christianity:—the whole system, according to both Christ and his apostles, resting on this one fact.

SECTION I.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIRACLES IN GENERAL:—CHARGE OF INCONSISTENCY REPELLED:—THE MIRACLES THEMSELVES NEVER IN EARLY TIMES DENIED.

By following the course just referred to, I am quite sensible, that there are not a few points which have, in a great measure, been left untouched, on

which I might, with equal ease and advantage to my cause, have dilated. Such, for example, are the following:—the prodigious *number* of our Lord's miracles; which many general expressions occurring in the evangelical narratives show to have been immensely greater than to a superficial reader, judging only from the comparatively few of which the particulars are given in detail, the record is apt to suggest:—their *variety* as well as number; embracing manifestations of power over all descriptions of bodily and mental distemper, over the phenomena of the physical creation, and over the dominion of the grave itself:—their *magnitude*, varying of course in their imposing aspects, yet all divinely great, and some of them, in the impression made by them, stupendous:—their universally *benevolent character*:—their *publicity*, and openness to universal inspection:—the *extent of country* over which they are recorded to have been wrought:—the *length of time* during which the frequent and unconcealed working of them continued:—the *manner* of their performance, so free of all pretence and ostentation, together with the artless simplicity of their narration—combining every symptom of conscious, straight-forward, unsuspecting honesty:—the *particularity of detail* as to some of them, in the mention of names and places, and of previous, concomitant, and subsequent circumstances:—the *dispositions* and *states of mind and feeling*, with which, by spectators, many of them are recorded to have been witnessed.

These, with other topics of a similar kind, might have afforded room for much greater amplitude of detail, both in the way of legitimate reasoning, and of pleasing and profitable illustration.—I am quite aware, indeed, that, with regard to some of them, the objection might be urged to which I have repeatedly alluded, as lying against certain modes of argumentation employed in evidence of our Lord's resurrection ;—namely, that the ground on which the argument is made to rest depends upon the authority of the record ; and that, that authority being once admitted, the miracles themselves, as forming part of the record, derive from it the same title to credence as the facts from which we frame our reasonings in their support.—On this view of the case, however, I should at once revert to my former position ;—the *early publication* of the documents recording the facts. If the statements contained in these documents were untrue,—THEN, surely, was the time for the detection and exposure of the falsehood ;—when there existed both all possible *means* for such detection and exposure, and all possible *motives* to employ those means,—and to employ them with instant and determined stringency and earnestness. In last chapter, we have applied this observation to the one fact, with its accompaniments, of Christ's resurrection. But with the very same amount of conclusiveness, may it evidently be applied to the miracles of our Lord in general : and the reader will pardon a slight degree of seeming repetition in

making this more general application of it.—Let him just think of what is immediately published to the world, as matter of authentic and well-known fact;—published especially to the people and the rulers of Judea:—(and the consideration of the alleged facts having been preached before they were published in writing,—instead of impairing, adds to the strength of our argument, and the validity of our conclusion:)—That very recently—within the brief remembrance of the then living generation,—a person of great notoriety, as a public character, had made his appearance amongst them; that for the space of three years, he had openly travelled about from place to place, throughout Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, in the avowed capacity of “a teacher come from God,” and that, amongst other things, wherever he came, he publicly performed, in attestation of his commission, vast numbers of the most astonishing miraculous works; generally by a word or a touch;—in almost all cases instantaneously;—and if, in any case, *by means*, by means not at all possessed, in themselves, of any imaginable virtue toward the accomplishment of the end;—and that all this was done unintermittingly for the above period, in all quarters of the country,—amidst friends and foes alike,—“not in a corner,” but in the open face of the world.—And then, moreover, it is soon after published, that in little more than a month subsequently to the time when this extraordinary public character had been put to death,—a number of men,

who were known to have been his constant attendants during these three years, stood up in the very heart of Jerusalem, during the celebration of a public festival, at which an immense concourse of Jews was convened from all quarters of the world,—and in the audience of rulers and people, made the following direct and pointed appeal :—“Ye men of Israel, hear these words:—Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, *as ye yourselves also know* ; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”—Now, it is manifest, that when such an appeal was published as having then been made, it must at once have been known whether it really *had* been made or not :—and if it had been made, and was not founded in truth, it must instantly and absolutely have refuted itself, and have been laughed to scorn, as the figment of a disordered imagination. It would not have been worth while for the heavily accused to be angry at the charge brought against them ; for all must have known, without even a rising doubt, that the statement on which the charge rested was one which had no foundation in truth.

In these circumstances, then, it is a most singular point of fact,—one of which infidelity must ever find it, as it ever has found it, no easy matter satisfactorily to dispose,—that the miracles in question

never were denied. Even while the published testimony to the facts was recent,—and indeed for many a subsequent day, their reality was never called in question. They were part of the means by which multitudes were brought to believe the truth of what they were wrought to attest :—and even those by whom that truth was rejected, never intimated a doubt of the miracles having been performed. On a variety of pretexts they might try to rid themselves of the conclusion to which they led ; a conclusion which they could not bear,—so mortifying to their pride, and so crucifying to all their worldliness, carnality, and sin ;—and they might, pertinaciously and virulently, harden themselves against it :—but the *facts* they never questioned. Neither Jews nor Heathens did. Even the bitterest infidel opposers of the Gospel—such men as *Celsus*, and *Porphyry*, and *Julian* (surnamed the Apostate)—satisfied themselves with ascribing them to magic. To deny their having been done they never ventured.—Now, of the *facts* of the evangelical narratives there can hardly be a stronger corroborative proof than this. These, whom I have named, as well as others, were not the men to allow any thing to pass unsifted, from which they thought there was even the remotest possibility of eliciting aught that might contribute to bring the Christian records into discredit, or to involve any portion of their contents in dubiety. Could they have brought forward any evidence in disproof or invalidation of their historical

authenticity, that evidence, we may be well assured, would not have been kept back, but made the very most of possible. Yet any thing of the kind they never pretended. The man who, in order to get rid of the argument in support of divine revelation from the prophecies of *Daniel*, was fain to allege, in opposition to the incontrovertible evidence of existing documents to the contrary, their having been written subsequently to the events predicted in them—(events, by the way, of which some are even yet in the womb of futurity)—and in the face too of all the concurrent proofs of their genuineness,—that man is not likely to have left undetected and unexposed even the flimsiest ground on which a sceptical surmise could be rested of fiction, or exaggeration, or misrepresentation, in the narratives of the evangelists. The ascription, by him and others, of the miracles recorded in these narratives to *magic*, was clearly the last resource of predetermined unbelief. It was, in truth, a giving up of the point. And the man who could now satisfy himself with such an allegation, would at once prove himself destitute of a sufficient measure of common sense, to entitle him to be argued with; and be assigned a place in the same category with those who claim the credit of prophecy and miracle for their favourite nostrums of *clairvoyance* and *mesmerism*. In the miracles of Christ, there were no such empirical preparatives;—nor were there any failures. Facts, of which these sceptics could not dispute the

reality, they endeavoured, by an unworthy appeal to the superstitious credulity, or the credulous superstition, of the age, to disparage.

I need not now, I presume, feel it necessary to say a single word in refutation of such a cavil. And, notwithstanding all the enlarged acquaintance with the secret resources and powers of nature with which the advancement of science, in all its departments, has furnished us, I cannot fancy to myself a man in possession of an understanding that retains ever so small a portion of its capacity for discriminating evidence, who can for one moment look at the recorded miracles of Jesus, and, having looked at them, in their number and their nature, can for another moment hesitate to admit, that *if they were really done, they were done by the power of God*. The simple conclusion of Nicodemus, with which we set out in defining the true character of a miracle, is the conclusion of sound reason and common sense — “We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, *except God be with him*.”

SECTION II.

OBJECTION FROM POWERS OF CREATED AGENTS SUPERIOR TO MAN:—MIRACLES TO WHICH NO SUCH POWER IS COMPETENT:—DIVINE CONTROL OVER ALL SUCH POWERS:—GENERAL POSITION STATED.

This conclusion, however, attempts have been made to invalidate, by an appeal, not to the secret

powers of nature alone, and to our ignorance of what another may know of these powers, and avail himself of his superior knowledge to deceive and impose upon us;—but also to *the possible and probable powers of created intelligences superior to man*. By such beings, it is alleged, many things may be done, or may be capable of being done, which are quite above the reach of human ability to effect; and which, when done, must, *to men*, necessarily have the appearance of miracle; whereas, in reality, there is nothing of the kind—no suspension, or violation, of any of nature's laws,—but simply the operation of fellow-creatures above us in the scale of being, exerting powers that naturally belong to them, but of which we do not happen to be directly cognizant:—there being nothing more miraculous in an *angel* effecting what the powers of an angel are competent to effect, than in a *man* effecting what the powers of a man are competent to effect. It does, however, I must confess, appear to me, that, both by the enemies and by the friends of divine revelation, many most extravagant and withal abundantly ridiculous things have been said and written respecting the powers of such invisible spiritual agents, both over the material and the immaterial creation—such things (some of them especially) as it would ill befit the gravity of my present subject to specify. Let two or three observations of a general complexion suffice:

1. In the *first* place:—To a large proportion,—I

may say to the great majority, of the miraculous works ascribed to Jesus and his Apostles, we cannot imagine the allegation respecting the powers of such superior created agents *to have any possible application*.—We can conceive, and that easily, I at once admit, of such an invisible agent bearing up a human body, contrary to the laws of gravity, when standing or walking on the surface of water; and in this way producing what to us has the appearance of something *supernatural*,—when, in fact, there is nothing supernatural in the case, but merely the putting forth of a power beyond that department of nature that comes within the range of our own observation and knowledge; a power, undiscernible by our senses. In this, and perhaps two or three other cases, we can conceive how the intervention of an unseen created agency (supposing such intervention to take place) might sufficiently account for the alleged fact. But when there come into question such acts as the giving of instantaneous sight to the born blind,—the immediate and entire removal, without the intervention of any means, of the most inveterate diseases,—the reproduction by a word of a mutilated limb,—the creation, at the moment of need, of bread for the hunger of thousands,—the instantaneous summoning of the dead from their death-beds, their biers, or their graves;—if we really can suppose the powers requisite for the production of such effects as these to belong to any orders of created agents,—the supposition, as it appears to me, must be

at the expense of obliterating every line of demarcation between the power of Deity and that of his creatures.—Some of the acts referred to, for example, are manifestly acts of *creation*; of the production of that which before had no existence. Now, if we can once bring ourselves to the persuasion of *creative* power residing in an agent who is himself a creature,—then, by what at all that is peculiar to Him are we to characterize and distinguish GOD? If there be aught whatever that is to be regarded as pertaining exclusively to DEITY, it is this—*CREATION*. And although, in the *manifestations* of this power, there may be greater and less, yet in *the power itself* there are *no degrees*. The very least infers the very greatest. The power that can create an atom, is competent to create a universe. It is simply the bringing into existence of what, in no form or state, had existence before—the production of something out of nothing—that constitutes creation:—no matter how small the scale. And if, I repeat, there be any power whatever, that is properly and peculiarly DIVINE, it is this.

2. *Secondly*:—Suppose the powers of any created agency to be as great as you will, they must still be powers *under the supreme control of Him by whom they have been imparted*; of Him, in whom all creatures “live, and move, and have their being.”—Suppose, if you will, (although the supposition is one beyond all the bounds of sober reason) *all miracles whatever* to be within the range of such powers;

let it not be forgotten that, on the part of the prophet who speaks in God's name, the appeal is to **HIM**, whose authority he claims for the message he delivers. When this appeal is made, the effect instantly takes place. Now in such a case, let the *immediate* agency by which the effect is produced be what it may,—the effect itself is *to us*, to all intents and purposes, a *miracle*; and has on our minds the impression intended by a miracle. The power by which the effect is accomplished must be either divine power in direct operation,—or it must be the power of some subordinate agent, put forth at the moment under the control of his will, and fulfilling his sovereign pleasure. Even, therefore, when we have made the *suppositio non supponenda*, the miracle is, in either case, a manifestation of the mind of God. The intervention of a subordinate power at his volition (supposing any power beneath his own competent to the production of the effect) is, in this respect, the very same thing as the immediate intervention of his own. It is his *seal*. These invisible agents, operating by his will and in subserviency to his ends, we must, notwithstanding their intelligence, regard as belonging to the same category of means and instruments, with winds, and fires, and waters, and any other of nature's elements and powers. And the conclusion, as to the mind of God, will be the same, whatever be the character of the agency,—whether holy or unholy—morally good or morally evil;—the one operating willingly, the other by constraint.

But that any *real miracle* has ever been wrought, or ever can be wrought, by evil spirits, in attestation of falsehood,—of what is in contrariety to the mind and will of the Supreme God, is a supposition which, for my own part,—whether it be perceived by those who advance it or not,—I cannot but regard as pregnant with equal contradiction, impiety, and peril. I would lay it down, with all becoming submission, yet with unhesitating conviction, as a *first truth*,—that *every genuine miracle is a divine attestation*;—and therefore, as a sequence, or as the same proposition under a negative form, that *no genuine miracle ever has been, or ever can be, wrought, in support of anything but truth*:—from which too it will follow,—that, in every instance, without exception, the inference of the truth and divine authority of what is thus attested is legitimate and valid.

SECTION III.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES IN ATTESTATION OF FALSEHOOD:—
 WHETHER BY GOD'S DIRECT OR BY INSTRUMENTAL AGENCY:
 —THE EVIDENCE SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME:—EXISTENCE OF
 EVIL SPIRITS KNOWN ONLY FROM THE BIBLE:—THE EXTENT
 OF THEIR POWERS TOO FROM THE SAME AUTHORITY:—INDEPENDENT
 POWER OF WORKING MIRACLES, ON THE PART OF
 ANY CREATURE, IMPOSSIBLE, AND THE SUPPOSITION OF IT
 IMPIOUS.

In so far as God's *own direct agency* is concerned, it cannot surely be needful that I should do more

than simply assume, as a point on which doubt would be blasphemy, that the Divine Being never can, by such direct agency, work miracles in attestation of what is *false*;—or even in such a way as to admit of their being, by possibility, so understood. Our minds at once revolt, with indignant loathing, from every supposition of the kind;—that, in any imaginable case, He—the “God that cannot lie”—should append to error and falsehood the appropriate signature and seal of truth! How painfully distressing and distracting, any such supposition to the minds of his intelligent creatures! Were it at all to be admitted, or even so much as surmised, how very hard would it appear to condemn and punish for hesitation and scepticism!—It is, in my apprehension, very far from being enough, to say, that the God of truth and righteousness will never, at the summing up, allow the preponderance, in the weight of proof, to be on the side of error;—that he will never desist, till He has made the balance turn clearly and determinately on the right side—the side of truth,—never desist, without thus giving what is right and true the decided victory. I cannot, for my own part, imagine any thing more derogatory to the dignity and honour of the faithful and immutable Jehovah, than to represent Him as, in any such way, playing truth and falsehood against each other,—throwing weights, alternately, into either scale, and making each, in its turn, for a time, preponderate. We are unable to associate

with the divine character anything that so nearly approximates to a temporary *equivocation*:—no—not even although the final establishment of truth be the alleged *ultimate object*. He never can require any procedure thus doubtful and ambiguous, for the attainment of any of his ends. It would be as if a man were to change sides alternately from truth to falsehood, and from falsehood to truth,—affirming, or seeming to affirm, for a time, first the one and then the other,—and, by the appearance of equal sincerity on both sides, holding his hearers in suspense and uncertainty on which to place their faith; and then, at last, settling the question on the side of truth by solemn asseveration and oath.—We do not like such a proceeding. We cannot give it our moral sanction. There is in it an equal want of becoming dignity, and of truthful and straight-forward “simplicity and godly sincerity.” Let us beware, then, of imputing, even in imagination and hypothesis, anything akin to it to God;—that God who so stringently interdicts his creatures from ever “doing evil that good may come,” and commands them to “abstain from all *appearance* of evil.”—Let it not be forgotten, that in any way to *attest* what is false is the same thing as to *utter* it. The latter we cannot for a moment allow ourselves to imagine the God of inviolable faithfulness ever doing, for any end whatever. And if we cannot imagine the *utterance*, neither must we imagine the *attestation*. The two are essentially one.

And if it be inconceivable that the blessed God should give attestation by *his own direct agency* to anything false,—in any way, for any end, or for however short a time;—the same great general principles equally forbid the supposition of his allowing a real miracle to be wrought, in sanction of falsehood, *by the instrumental agency of another*. Let it be remembered, that on the minds of those before whose eyes the miracle is wrought, the effect is the same, whether the agency be direct or indirect, —immediate or instrumental. When the appeal is made to HIS NAME, and is avowedly designed to substantiate a claim to his authority,—his permitting any real miracle, in such circumstances, to be performed, would be the very same thing as if He himself, by his own power, directly effected it:—just as, for what is done in our name, not ostensibly merely, but with our admitted concurrence, we become, when it is in our power to hinder it, as really responsible as if we did it ourselves.

It is very evident, that, in the case of *good* beings, the intervention of any power which they may be supposed to possess could only be on the side of God, in support of his truth, and in accordance at the time with whatever was the dictate of his will. The question now before us, therefore, must be regarded as having special—I might even say *exclusive* reference to the power of beings of an opposite description,—of *wicked* and *malevolent* beings;—of invisible evil agents, actuated by principles at vari-

ance with the mind of God and with the best interests of men.—In regard to *such* beings, then, it may be well for us all, and especially for any who are prone to think hastily and rashly, to weigh, in such an argument as that now before us, the following considerations:—

1. That of the *existence of such agents at all*—such *evil spirits*—we have *no certain evidence*—(I might say *no evidence whatever*)—*excepting in the very revelation itself whose divine authority is the subject of our investigation*.—It is therefore clear, that, in such an investigation, their existence is a point which no man can be entitled to assume:—in as much as, to assume it on the ground of *scripture testimony*, would be first to take for granted the truth of the Bible, and then to convert one of its own peculiar discoveries into a ground of argument by which its truth may be invalidated. Apart from revelation, the existence of any invisible intelligent agents, distinct from God, is a matter of merely gratuitous conjecture; on which it is altogether inadmissible that any reasoning should be founded. The evidence of their very existence is neither more nor less than the evidence of the revelation in which that existence is affirmed. Independently of that revelation, there are, on such a subject, no proved and settled premises; and what is not proved itself can never be the ground of proof for anything else. The uncertainty of the premises must of course attach to every conclusion deduced

from them. If a man chooses to fancy the existence of unseen evil spirits, he may:—who can hinder him?—but he must not expect that what he builds on his own fancy is to be accepted as legitimate argument. And no contradiction can be imagined more flagrant, than to found any reasoning by which the Bible is to be proved false, on a ground which, in order to its having any validity, assumes the Bible to be true!

2. Should it, in reply, be said,—We have evidence sufficiently satisfactory of the existence of other created beings superior to ourselves, in the fact of the gradation of being that appears in our own world,—inasmuch as this fact affords fair ground for the inference that there is a gradation *above* man, as there is a gradation *below* him;—and along with this, in the abundant manifestations before our eyes of the exuberance of creative power and goodness, on the part of the Godhead;—as well as in other similar considerations:—the obvious answer is:—

First—That, supposing such evidence were admitted to amount even to certainty, it would be little, if at all, to the purpose;—inasmuch as, the mere *existence* of any other orders of intelligent beings would afford no proof whatever of *two* things,—both alike essential to its having any thing to do with our present argument;—*first*, of their being *in a fallen state*—a state of alienation from God, and moral pravity;—or, *secondly*, of their *connexion or interference*, in any way, *with the affairs of that depart-*

ment of the universe to which we ourselves belong.—And on this second point it might be added,—that so far as our experience goes, all analogy is against the supposition of such connexion and interference:—*we* know nothing of what passes in *their* department;—what ground, then, *can* we have—barring the evidence of revelation—of *their* having any knowledge of, or any thing to do with, *ours*?—Then:—

Secondly—This being the case,—that the only evidence we have of the *existence* of such an order of beings is the testimony of the very Book whose divine authority is the point in debate; it inevitably follows, that from the same authority which informs us of their existence must we form our conceptions of *the extent and the limits of their powers*. When we find men writing and talking at random, as they very often do, about the *possible powers* of such invisible agents,—we at once ask them, what right they have to assume even their *existence*? And, if they have no right to assume their existence, all their speculations about their possible capacities can be nothing better than the mere *sport of fancy*. If the only source of information we have about them, assigns to them no such powers as they are pleased to imagine possible;—then are they building on sand, or on air. Their argument has no basis whatever beyond mere hypothetical assumption,—nothing better than fond imagination;—or they are, unreflectingly, proceeding on the testimony of the very book whose authority they deny and are seek-

ing to disprove. The question, therefore, comes to be—what is the extent of power, which, in the Scriptures, is assigned to *evil spirits*? Now, the very asking of such a question is useless, unless the truth of the Scriptures, as a divine revelation, be first admitted;—that is, unless the very point be assumed which is the subject of our present inquiry.—And, still further,—it is not surely to be supposed, that this very revelation would assign to these evil spirits powers such as would invalidate and overturn the very evidence on which it rests its own claim to be acknowledged as of divine authority! Such a supposition would make the Book suicidal;—arming it against itself, and making itself its own destroyer and its own victim.

This is enough. It is needless to go further. When such is the fact, that we know nothing of the very existence of such beings, except from the very book about whose authority we are arguing,—all further reasoning which has the existence of such beings as its assumed basis, is at once superseded. It becomes a mere “beating the air;”—arguing for arguing’s sake. It can lead to nothing. Still I may be allowed just to observe—

Thirdly—That, to the general principle laid down —(the principle, namely, that created powers being all necessarily under the control of deity,—his permitting, in the supposed circumstances of appeal to himself, those powers to be put forth, must, in effect, be the same thing with his own immediate interposi-

tion)—such an objection as the following might be urged:—we do not find that the powers possessed by our *fellow-men* are actually restrained from being put forth in attempts to impose upon and mislead us;—what sufficient reason, then, can we have from analogy, to conclude against the powers of *other orders of beings* being also put forth for similar purposes of imposition and deception?—My answer to such an objection would have been;—that the cases compared are very far from being parallel. In the case of our fellow-men, we have to do with what is visible; what is before us; what is attainable by ourselves as well as by them; what is open to our examination, and what we are perfectly competent to form a judgment about; what we can gauge, and meet, and cope with:—whereas, in the case of such other beings, —invisible spiritual agents,—it is quite otherwise; —their very mode of existence is a mystery to us; they are altogether out of the range of our observation, and of the remotest possibility, on our part, of forming any estimate whatever of either the nature and amount of their powers, or of their methods of putting them forth;—their acting is, to us, all in the dark:—and it does seem utterly at variance with all the conceptions we can form of the administration of a righteous and a benevolent Being, to suppose, that in regard to matters which are to them of such transcendent importance, relating as they do to their everlasting destinies, He would

leave one part of his intelligent offspring, even though fallen,—to be the dupes of another class,—whose deceptive powers they are under a natural and insuperable incapacity of discerning, and measuring, and providing against;—whose very existence they have no means of discovering;—and to whose delusions, consequently, they could not, on any principle of justice, be blamed or punished for yielding.

I should further, in reply to such an objection, have recurred to my former position;—should have appealed anew to those descriptions of miracles which, beyond all controversy, do involve, in their performance, the forth-putting of a power truly and properly *divine*; and should have argued thus;—that, supposing there are other miracles, of an inferior order, to the effecting of which the powers of inferior agents are competent,—yet, since they are wrought in support of the same cause, or in attestation of the same doctrines, with these superior—these highest—these divine ones,—we are warranted to conclude, that they are performed by the same power;—or, if not by that very power directly put forth,—with the direct permission, and with the direct and full concurrence, of the Being who possesses it,—and by whom all the powers of intermediate agency are imparted and controlled. But, sound and conclusive as such reasoning might have been,—it is, as I have said, entirely superseded by the consideration we have been stating,—namely, that we know nothing of the very existence of any such beings,—

the unseen agents whose mysterious powers are supposed to be thus capable of imposing upon us:—nothing, I mean, independently of revelation,—which of course, in such a question, cannot be taken into account, being itself the very subject whose divine origin and authority are in question. When its authority therefore is set aside, all respecting these beings is *pure hypothesis*:—and the *beings themselves* being thus hypothetical, their *powers* must be hypothetical;—and *the argument* which is founded on what is hypothetical, must itself have the same hypothetical character with its premises; seeing no conclusion, in force any more than in extent, can go beyond the premises on which it rests. It is thus *all hypothesis*—*all conjecture* together; and cannot so much as touch the validity of our great general argument.—Take the Book away whose authority is the very point to be determined,—and it becomes a mere idle speculation,—a fancy—an “airy nothing.”

As to the idea of evil spirits, in any imaginable circumstances, working miracles—real miracles—in contravention of the mind and will of God,—it has ever appeared to my view as nothing short of the most daring blasphemy to imagine it. I cannot grant it—no, not for one moment, nor to one hair’s-breadth of extent,—that Satan, the Arch-fiend, should wield the elements of nature, and command its resources, and control its powers, at his pleasure:—that he should be competent to do, and actually

should do, for attaining his own purposes, and gaining credit to his own lies, the very things by which the purposes of the Godhead are effected, and the eternal truths of his word are established!—Away with the self-contradictory, the impious thought!—Be the powers of the Arch-adversary of God and man what they may,—it cannot but be evident to every thinking mind, that to exalt them to such an elevation as this is really to endow their possessor with *divinity*!—Yet even by the best of men, and from the best of motives, and for the best of ends,—but, as I cannot but apprehend, under most mistaken conceptions, exceedingly extravagant and unwarrantable things have been said, in regard to the powers of that proud rival of the “Lord of all,”—“Satan—the god of this world,”—of whose indomitable spirit, according to the Bard of Paradise, the presumptuous maxim is—

“Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.”

—No:—“the working of Satan” is in “*lying* signs and wonders,” not in such as are *real*. While he is too politic to damage his own cause, and shake the stability of his kingdom, by presenting such a spectacle to the world as that of “Satan casting out Satan,” and thus “divided against himself;”—yet, having thoroughly studied human nature, the great field of his temptations, he is artful enough to know what are the kinds of doctrine that

take best with the *likings* of men, and what the kinds of proof that *tell best* upon their *convictions* :—and, feeling—feeling with malignant indignation and fruitless regret—that he is but a creature, and mortifyingly incapable of equalling the doings of omnipotence, he is fain to *simulate* where he cannot *match* ; and, where he cannot produce a *reality*, to present a *likeness*.—I repeat, therefore, the position, reserving the *vindication* of it for another chapter,—that *neither by the power of God himself, nor by the power of Satan, nor by any other power whatever, has any real miracle ever been wrought, in support and attestation of any thing else than TRUTH—DIVINE TRUTH,—and that consequently, in no case are we to consider ourselves as required to judge of the miracle by the doctrine—but simply to examine into the reality of the miracle, and, if it abides the tests of genuineness, to conclude, that what it has been wrought to attest MUST BE TRUTH.*

In opposition to this, however, it has been alleged, that whatever be the agency conceived to be employed in their performance, the Scriptures themselves give decided countenance to the idea of their having, in certain cases and circumstances, been wrought in support of the cause of falsehood, and in opposition to God and to his truth.—This is a serious allegation. It calls for serious inquiry. I have avowed my utter disbelief of it, as, in its own nature, and antecedently to all examination, in the very highest degree improbable,—and as un-

founded in any of those portions of God's word that have been adduced in its support.—To the examination of these and of the reasonings founded upon them, we shall proceed in our next chapter.

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CHAPTER VI.

EXAMINATION OF THOSE PASSAGES AND RECORDED FACTS
IN SCRIPTURE, APPEALED TO IN PROOF OF REAL MIRACLES
HAVING BEEN WROUGHT IN SUPPORT OF FALSEHOOD,—AND BY AN AGENCY INFERIOR TO GOD'S.

IN the close of last chapter, I took up the position, that *no real miracle ever was wrought in attestation of falsehood*; but, on the contrary, that the conclusion from the reality of the miracle to the truth of the doctrine, was, in every instance, direct and legitimate.—I am aware that this position is not in harmony with the view taken by some writers, and writers of deserved eminence, on this branch of the Christian evidence. That I cannot help. To my mind it has ever appeared incomparably the most simple,—and the least embarrassed with perplexing questions:—questions, to which every other theory on the subject is painfully exposed. This, I should think, will hardly be questioned by any,—*provided it can be satisfactorily maintained*. I think that it can,—and that it alone can. And this is the point which I now set myself to establish.—I mentioned that in opposition to the ground thus taken up it had been alleged, that “whatever be the agency conceived to

be employed, *the Scriptures themselves* give decided countenance to the idea of miracles having, in certain cases and circumstances, been wrought in support of the cause of falsehood, and in opposition to that of truth and the God of truth."—Now, could this be made good, there would be nothing for us, but to bow to that authority, which by us is held to be established as divine. I adhere, however, with full confidence, to what I formerly said on this point,—namely, that, antecedently to all examination, it was, in the highest degree, *improbable*;—and that by none of those portions of God's word which have been adduced in support of it was it *fairly borne out*.

I have now, then, to request the reader's attention, while we examine the chief of those passages on which the allegation has been founded. And the first to which we direct his notice is, in its sound at least, and on the first reading of it, one of the most startling of them all.

SECTION I.

THE CASE OF THE "PROPHET, OR DREAMER OF DREAMS," SUPPOSED BY MOSES—DEUT. XIII. 1—4.

Deut. xiii. 1—4.—"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and

let us serve them ; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams : for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him."

I cannot bear, in any case, the adoption of a theory that is manifestly and palpably untenable, for the sake of getting rid of a difficulty. This is to substitute a greater evil for a less,—one really more detrimental to the cause of truth. I cannot, therefore, on any account, adopt, as the principle of explanation for this passage, that theory according to which the case supposed in it is regarded as merely *hypothetical*,—a case, that is, which never was to occur, and never could occur. It is enough to say, that there could be no "*proving* of them," on the part of Jehovah, if the case supposed, whatever be its nature, was never to take place.—There is no need for having recourse to any such evasion. The difficulty is more imaginary than real. Let us look it fairly in the face.

The "*sign*" or the "*wonder*," then, might belong to one or other of two kinds. It might be either the *foretelling* of some *event* that was "near to come," (for they are themselves supposed to witness it :)—or it might be some *act* that appeared *preternatural* and *miraculous*.—There is one thing, then, which, in

the first instance, I wish the reader specially to mark :—it is,—how frequently, and how strongly, in the Scriptures, both the one and the other of these—the *prediction of future events* and the *performance of miraculous works*, are claimed on the part of Jehovah, as the explicit and conclusive proofs of *his authority*, and consequently of *truth*,—which alone his authority could ever attest. Many a time does He, by his servants, make his appeal to them ; and challenge all the false pretenders to Godhead,—the deities of the Heathen and their devotees—to the production of these very evidences of their divine claims.—First, as to *foreknowledge*, see, as a specimen—Isa. xli. 21—24,—“Produce your cause, saith the Lord ; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen ; let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them : or declare us things to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods : yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold ye are of nothing, and your work of nought : an abomination is he that chooseth you.” And Isa. xlv. 6—8,—“Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts ; I am the first, and I am the last ; and besides me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I ap-

pointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God; I know not any."—Then, as to *miracles*,—many are the passages, from which I might show, how pointedly and exclusively Moses and the prophets appropriate *them* to Jehovah. He is emphatically and distinctively denominated "the God that doeth wonders." It was just after he had executed his "signs and wonders" in the land of Ham, and had "made the waters of the deep a way for his ransomed to pass over," and with pointed reference to these mighty deeds,—that he was extolled as, by such works, distinguishing Himself from all the "gods many and lords many" of the Gentile nations:—"Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like unto thee; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, DOING WONDERS?"—And in many places, particular works are selected, and held forth as appropriately and solely HIS.

Now, in these circumstances, the supposition does seem to me altogether inadmissible, that in the passage under consideration, Jehovah (for the authority of Moses was that of Jehovah) assumes a *true miracle* to be actually wrought in support of *idolatry*! The miracles wrought by Moses himself had been wrought, every one of them, for the establishment of Jehovah's *exclusive divinity*;—of his claim to be

worshipped as *the one and only God*.—The working of them was not merely for the purpose of effecting the deliverance of Israel. That could have been accomplished without them. It was designed for the still higher purpose of asserting and settling this all-important point,—the solitary divinity and supremacy of Israel's God. And in the Scriptures, as already said, such miracles are incessantly and unhesitatingly urged, as decisive evidences of true divinity.

Do you ask me, then, to what descriptions of “signs and wonders” the passage before us refers? I answer at once—I believe the reference to be to those *prodigies* and *portents*, which were so customarily appealed to by the Heathen soothsayers and diviners; and which, in imitation of them, were resorted to by the “false prophets” in Israel. These did not involve anything really miraculous,—any deviation from, or suspension of, the laws of nature,—any thing such as “no man could do unless God were with him:”—they were no more than wonders of either power or knowledge, such as, if they were *acts*, a superior acquaintance with those laws might enable its possessor to *do*,—or, if they were of the nature of *prediction*, a more shrewd and penetrating foresight than ordinary of the probable or sure results of symptomatic events or circumstances might enable a man to *know*:—while, at the same time, the deed might be so extraordinary, and the coincidence of the event with the anticipation so re-

markable, as, in the eyes of men in general, to have not a little of the appearance of something quite surpassing the power and the knowledge of mere humanity. The pretenders to inspiration might, in many instances, fail;—and indeed the terms in which Moses here expresses himself seem naturally to convey as much as that so they should:—but, both as to act and prediction, there might be an occasional and striking success. They could not *always* fail:—they could not *always* be in the wrong.—The Israelites were prone to idolatry,—ever, with an infatuated credulity, ready to lend a favourable ear to the claims of the gods of “the Heathen that were round about them;” and thus easily imposed upon by whatever could be made to wear even the semblance of *supernaturalism*. And they are here warned against all hasty and rash conclusions;—as if the occasional coming to pass of such wonders (the secret of which they might not be able to detect) involved any thing really miraculous,—any thing really evidential of divine claims.

This, then, I avow to be my idea of the passage. It will be admitted to be, in itself, sufficiently simple:—and simplicity, when it accords with other considerations, is never a slight recommendation.—Let us now, then, see, whether, in addition to its requiring no distorting or over-straining of any of its terms, it has not other and decisive reasons of preference. Observe, then—

1. It is in full harmony with the well-known

fact, of the Heathen diviners, and abettors of idolatry, making use of such portents, and prodigies, and arts of soothsaying and disclosing of the future. Heathen historians and poets are full of them:—and many a time are such characters referred to by Moses and the prophets, and the ancient people of God warned against their crafty delusions:—

2. It is in equal harmony with the further fact, that notwithstanding the peremptory and oft-repeated prohibitions of Jehovah, the Israelites gave great encouragement to the same descriptions of persons, and to the same magical, astrological, and necromantic practices:—As a specimen—see Jer. xxvii. 9—“Therefore, hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:”—Isa. ii. 6—“Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers:”—Isa. xlvii. 12, 13—“Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.”

3. This principle of interpretation is in agreement, at the same time, with the many instances already referred to, in which miracles and predictions of the future are appropriated to God, as the proofs of his exclusive Godhead, and the consequent infallible attestations of whatever message comes from Him.—And here I may strengthen my position by the authority of another writer, with whose views on this point, though differing widely on others, my own fully coincide:—“With regard to miracles, or deviations from the ordinary course of nature, the Scriptures refer them to God as their author. Nor do they ascribe them to him *eminently*, as some pretend; but absolutely *appropriate* them to him *alone*. Witness the song of Moses—‘Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, amongst the gods?—who is like unto thee, —doing wonders?’ What words can more strikingly deny to all other beings the power of working miracles, and challenge it as the sole prerogative of the true God, than the following passages? ‘Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things:’—‘Thou art great, and doest wondrous things; thou art God alone:’—Such language often occurs—‘Thou art the God that doeth wonders:’—‘To Him who alone doeth great wonders.’* Whenever the sacred writers occasionally mention any particular miracles, whether

* Exod. xv. 11. Psal. lxxii. 18. Psal. lxxxvi. 10. Psal. lxxvii. 14. Psal. cxxxvi. 4.

of power or of knowledge,—they affirm concerning every one of them separately, what they do concerning them all in general. Thus they affirm it to be the sole and exclusive prerogative of God to raise the dead, to open the eyes of the blind, to tread upon the waves of the sea, to still the noise of its waves, to reveal secret and distant transactions, to foretell future events, and to search the heart of man.* These declarations of Scripture, though they are particularly levelled against the false pretences to prophecies and miracles amongst the Pagans, are no more to be reconciled with the Devil's possessing a supernatural power, than with the opinion of any Heathen gods possessing that power. If any being whatever can perform miracles besides God, it is not true that God alone can perform them."†

4. There is not, in the view we thus take of the passage, the slightest inconsistency with the expression—"for the Lord thy God *doth prove thee*;"—that expression meaning no more than that Jehovah would permit such occurrences, for the trial of the sincerity and strength of their allegiance to Him; the testing of the firmness of their faith in what He had revealed to them of Himself, and in the divinity of all the mighty—the truly miraculous works, by which he had set his seal to that revelation.—Then—

* Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6. 2 Cor. i. 9. Psal. cxlvi. 8. Job ix. 8. Psal. lxv. 9. Psal. cvii. 29. Dan. ii. 28, 29, 47. Isa. xlii. 9; xlv. 21; xlv. 9, 10.

† Farmer on Miracles. Chap. iii. Section v.

5. The contrary—the supposition of a real *bonâ fide* miracle having been wrought—that is a work such as no power but that of God could effect,—or of a prediction having been delivered and fulfilled, such as no human sagacity—no foreknowledge less than divine—could have anticipated,—will be found very hard of reconciliation with two essential features of the divine character:—the one contained in the words—“God that *cannot lie* ;”^{*} and the other in the words—“God cannot be tempted of evil, *neither tempteth he any man* :”[†]—for, as to the former, the setting, or permitting to be set, of what is understood to be the seal of Heaven to that which is false in sentiment or sinful in act, is so very near an approach at least to falsifying, as to make us shrink, with a shuddering recoil, from the imputation of it to the “God of truth :”—and, as to the latter, there would evidently, in such a case, be a temptation, and even much more than a temptation—something very like an imposed obligation—to the belief of a lie. Forget not, that it is the working of a *real* miracle I am now supposing:—and I cannot, I confess, bring myself to fancy the blessed God being in any way, direct or indirect, accessory to the confounding of the evidences of truth and falsehood; or Himself, for any imaginable purpose, giving his countenance and apparent sanction to any error,—and above all, to “that abominable

^{*} Titus i. 2.

[†] James i. 13.

thing which He hated"—idolatry. The supposition of the miracle being effected by *Satanic* agency makes little, if any, material difference;—the divine *concurrence* being, upon principles formerly stated, very much the same thing with the direct putting forth of his power. How much more consistent with every conception He himself teaches us to form of Him,—and how much more satisfactory and delightful to our minds,—to have the full and undisturbed conviction, that the God with whom "it is impossible to lie," and who "desireth truth in the inward parts," has, and can have, nothing to do with such deception,—no participation in it,—no connexion with it!—Further—

6. The difficulty of such a supposition is not a little augmented,—and the moral loathing which the thought of it inspires not a little deepened, by the order which immediately follows in verse 5th— "And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death, because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God." What are we to think of that principle of interpretation, which,—by supposing the sign or the wonder a real miracle, and, as such, the effect of divine power or divine intervention,—would make Jehovah an associate and co-operator in the act, and yet represent him as pronouncing a verdict of "death" upon the other party in it,—the human instrument? To my mind, the very thought of such a thing is blasphemous. My whole soul revolts from it. It is out of all har-

mony with the character of the "righteous Lord who loveth righteousness."

7. I have still to mention—lastly—that *our* interpretation is in accordance—and alone in accordance—with the criterion, or test, prescribed explicitly by Jehovah himself, of the divine commission of any prophet, and the consequent divine authority of his message. That criterion, or test, we find in Deut. xviii. 20—22,—“But the prophet, who shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” Like every thing that comes from God, this is straight-forward and explicit. There is no misunderstanding it. And it is instantly felt to accord with every dictate of sound reason. Now, it cannot but be apparent to every reader, that to explain the former passage of real prophecies and real miracles, is to set the two passages in irreconcilable contrariety to each other. And surely this, of itself, ought to be enough, for justifying the interpretation we have put upon the former of the two. We owe it, in common candour, to any author, that, between two principles of interpretation we choose

the one which saves him from the charge of flatly and palpably contradicting himself.

After quoting the passage on which we are now commenting, Mr. Penrose says:—"Of the application of this principle there is a very remarkable example in the case of Hananiah the prophet, recorded at length in the twenty-eighth chapter of Jeremiah."*—This surprised me. The case of Hananiah is anything but an example of that supposed by Moses.—1. The "*sign or wonder*" given by Hananiah was not a miracle, real or pretended, performed at the time: it was a prophetic intimation—to be fulfilled at a future day.—2. Did this "sign or wonder," then, "*come to pass?*" This is the case supposed by Moses, by which, as permitted in his providence, God was to "prove" his people Israel. In the case of Hananiah, there was no such *proving*:—for, instead of his prediction "coming to pass," another, from the lips of the true prophet, dictated to him by Jehovah, took the place of it,—namely, that of the death of Hananiah within the current year. And thus,—3. Instead of the case of Hananiah being an example of the "sign or wonder given" by a *false* prophet coming to pass,—it was a "remarkable example" of the *test* by which a *true* prophet was to be distinguished from a false pretender, according to the other passage just quoted from Moses.—And to this very test, accordingly,

* Penrose on Miracles, Prelim. Dissert., Sect. ii. page 28.

did Jeremiah bring Hananiah's prediction:—"Hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people:—The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence:—the prophet who prophesieth of peace,—*when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.*" Hananiah's prophecy of peace did *not* come to pass:—Jeremiah's prophecy of his death *did* come to pass:—and thus the Divine test gave a divine verdict between the two. The case, therefore, it will be perceived, tells in favour of our position, that both *miracle* and *prophecy*—the wonder of *power* and the wonder of *foreknowledge*—are *from God alone*.

By some the position has been taken up, that there are cases in which *the miracle is to be tested*, as to its divine reality, *by the doctrine*, rather than the doctrine by the miracle. But this is a point of so much importance, that, before proceeding to the consideration of other passages, we shall make it the subject of a distinct Section.

SECTION II.

ON THE QUESTION, WHETHER, IN ANY CASE, THE MIRACLE REQUIRES TO BE TESTED BY THE DOCTRINE.

A modern, and in many respects able, writer on miracles thus expresses himself:—"This fact—that

the kingdom of lies has its wonders no less than the kingdom of truth, would alone be sufficient to convince us that miracles cannot be appealed to absolutely and simply, in proof of the doctrine which the worker of them proclaims;—and that God's word expressly declares the same." In proof of this, he refers to the very passage that has just been under our review; and adds:—"A miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass. That which alone it claims for him at the first is a right to be listened to:—it puts him in the alternative of being from heaven or from hell. The doctrine must first commend itself to the conscience as being *good*; and only then can the miracle seal it as being *divine*. But the first appeal is from the doctrine to the conscience,—to the moral nature in man."*—Now such a statement seems to me to involve this branch of evidence in needless complexity, as well as to strip the miracles of a large proportion (we shall see immediately whether we might not say *the whole*) of their evidential weight and worth. If we must first, by an appeal to our "moral nature," ascertain the doctrine to be *good*,—then have we, at the same time, ascertained it to be *true*:—since no doctrine can be really and intrinsically *good*, that is *not true*; *truth*, as to any doctrine, being the very first ingredient, or element, of its *goodness*. And, if we have

* Trench, pp. 23, 24.

thus ascertained it to be *good and true*, we have surely come as near as possible to ascertaining that it is *divine*. It is admitted, indeed, by the writer in question, that "all which is good and true is from God." So that, all that remains to be attested by the miracle is, that the doctrine, previously, and independently of the miracle, admitted as good and true, is, in his own terms—"A new word from Him,—a new speaking, on his part, to man."—But, as I have parenthetically hinted, even this much may fairly be questioned. If, so far as the miracle is concerned, the message which it accompanies may be from *hell* as well as from *heaven*—from the *Devil* as well as from *God*—from "the kingdom of *lies* no less than from the kingdom of *truth*;"—if the miracle implies no more than "a right to be listened to," having nothing in it at all evidential of the source from which the message comes;—it is not easy to see how it can *become* evidential of this, *after* that source has been ascertained from the nature of the message itself. If it is not proof *at first* of the message being from God, it cannot be proof *afterwards*. It may, if you will, be regarded as attesting its being "a new word"—but not as attesting its being "a new word *from Him*," or "a new speaking, on his part, to man." *That* is determined by the character of the message itself, as tested by man's "conscience," or "moral nature." The miracle attests nothing. It may be a *diabolical* sign, just as really and as much as a *divine* one. It is

solely the nature of the doctrine that certifies its origin; not the miracle *at all*. The theory, as it appears to me, divests miracles of their evidential character *entirely*. But in the Bible itself, miracles are appealed to as direct and conclusive proofs both of the divinity of the prophet's commission, and of the truth of his message. In the former view Nicodemus, as repeatedly noticed, understood them, when he said—"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." And, on different occasions, Jesus sanctions the principle on which his conclusion rested. He makes his appeal to his works—"The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."—So too did the Jews of his day understand this description of proof:—their demand was—how sadly soever they might fail to act up to it,—“What sign showest thou, then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work?”* It is on his miracles specially that he bases his claim to have what he taught believed. How pointedly he does this—in the passage which immediately follows that quoted above—“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.” And again, in another place—“If I had not done among them the works which

* John vi. 30.

none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."*—The only sense in which the view we are now commenting on can possess any portion of truth, is one which renders it very useless, or at least very harmless, in our present discussion;—namely, that when by miracles—manifest, numerous, and decisive—any principle, or any system of principles, has been clearly attested to be divine,—no true miracle can ever be wrought in attestation of any principle, or system of principles, that is in opposition to it, or at variance with it. This is a proposition as clear, as that God cannot contradict himself:—and indeed to this, and to nothing more, does it amount;—unless the horrible supposition be admitted, of evil beings possessing at once the power and the liberty to work genuine miracles, in support of their lies, *at their own discretion*. I am solicitous, as I have said, to establish the position, that no genuine miracle ever was wrought,—and that, under the Divine administration, no such miracle ever can be wrought, save in support of *truth*. With the single exception just mentioned, it appears to me a proposition next to axiomatic, that the doctrine must be tested by the miracle,—not the miracle by the doctrine.

And let us, for one moment, mark the nature of the special case of exception,—the case namely,

* John x. 25, 37, 38; xv. 24.

in the passage which has been under consideration. It is *not* the *nature of the doctrine* that is here properly the test of the reality of the miracle; it is rather the fact of its having already been attested as divinely true, *by previous miracles*,—miracles bearing all the indubitable marks of having been “wrought of God.” It is not as ascertained to be true by the inward testimony of “our own moral nature” (though that need not be excluded from its share in the proof)—that it is to be held fast against all pretended evidences to the contrary; but as having had its divine authority established by all the “signs and wonders, and diverse miracles” of preceding ages.—The true state of the case appears to be this:—The people of Israel had seen the exclusive divinity of their own Jehovah attested as a fundamental truth by real miracles,—numerous, and stupendous. It was, therefore, to be regarded as a point settled;—as forming the first and fundamental article of their religious system. The very terms employed by Moses in the passage imply an appeal to these *true* miracles,—as having, all of them, as with one voice, proclaimed—“Jehovah—He is the God;—Jehovah, He is the God!” They were the voice of that Jehovah himself, declaring his own unity—saying, in effect—“Hear, O Israel; Jehovah, your God, is one Jehovah!”—Such miracles could not possibly be performed for opposite purposes,—for the establishment of opposite doctrines. And therefore, no apparent

prodigy,—and no occasional coincidence, how remarkable soever, of fact or event with shrewd conjecture, from reading “the signs of the times,” was ever to be allowed by any of them to shake or to weaken their firm conviction of the one grand truth of the divinity of Jehovah in opposition to all the idols of the Pagan world around them, or to tempt them to the folly and the sin of idolatrous defection. The “false prophet,” or dreamer of dreams, is by Moses supposed to speak “in the name of other gods” than Him whose supreme and only Godhead had, by such a succession of miraculous evidences, been so thoroughly established among them. The case, then, it will be perceived, was not properly one of *doctrine against doctrine*, but of *miracle against miracle*. And the spirit of the admonition is,—that the miracles which they had already witnessed on the one side,—so vast, so numerous, so incontrovertibly manifestative of divine power—of omnipotence put forth in attestation of truth,—were to render them, as well they might, proof against the seductive influence of any pretended wonder—so necessarily paltry in the comparison—by which their faith might be assailed.

On the same principle, neither is the case of the Jews in our Lord’s time resisting and rejecting the evidence of those numerous and stupendous miracles by which his mission and message were attested a fair instance of the testing of the miracle by the doctrine. It was, in their case too, miracle against

miracle,—God against God. From the writings of the Old Testament prophets, which, under the biassing and blinding influence of a worldly state of mind, they had misunderstood and perverted, they had embraced certain false conceptions of the coming Messiah and his kingdom. These conceptions they tenaciously held, as God's own truth, contained in those writings which the most abundant miraculous evidence had stamped with his authority. Against all spiritual views of the ends of the Messiah's mission and the nature of his kingdom, they had all the prepossessions of a previous faith, along with all the predilections of a carnal, ambitious, worldly spirit. They delighted in having the miraculous attestations of the prophetic writings on the side of anticipations which were so much to their mind. When they saw, therefore, the condition, the character, and the teaching of Jesus to be so contrary to these anticipations, they of course regarded his pretensions as contradictory of "Moses and the prophets;" and that was the same thing as their being contradictory of God. And, as God could not be supposed to contradict himself, they were fain to impute the miracles of Jesus to another agency than the divine. Their previous favourite faith rested, as they conceived, on all the ancient miraculous works of Moses and the prophets. They must either, therefore, disown the one class of miracles or the other: and, from the strong leaning of their earthly and sensual minds, there could be little difficulty in

predicting by which they would hold. It was not on the ground of any testimony of their "conscience" and their "moral nature," that the evidence of the claims of Jesus was rejected by them. To such testimony the appeal might have been powerfully made on the other side. And so, indeed, it was. But there was a counter appeal—the appeal of their worse nature; and it prevailed.

And this naturally leads me to remark, how exceedingly precarious, in regard to the truth of any doctrine, must be this appeal to man's "moral nature." It is a nature which—apart altogether from the representations of the Book whose divinity is the subject of discussion, universal observation and experience abundantly show to be in a state of defection from rectitude, and therefore under a bias by which even its moral judgments are ever apt to be perverted. They who make their appeals most confidently to it are prone (not over-gratefully) to forget that in countries like our own, this perversion is counteracted, in greater and less degrees, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, by the prevalence of the very Christianity which they are seeking to set aside and supplant; and that, to form a just appreciation of the amount of its influence, we should look to the moral and religious condition of countries where no such counteraction exists.—Dr. Samuel Clarke—who, like Penrose and Trench, holds the principle of testing the miracle by the doctrine—divides doctrines into "good, bad, and

indifferent." Not having Dr. Clarke's work, and having failed of procuring it, I take this division from an acute writer in Kitto's Journal of Sacred Literature, already referred to. Giving the substance of Dr. Clarke's views, he subjoins to the statement of the division—"No miracle can prove a doctrine that our moral sense pronounces bad. Such a doctrine may be accompanied by a miracle, but the miracle is not a true one; that is, it is not from God. When the doctrine is one which, by the natural light we possess, is obviously good, those miracles which accompany it are to be regarded as from God. It is, however, only the last kind of doctrine, viz. the indifferent, that presents an appropriate sphere for the action of miracles. The doctrines termed *indifferent* are those which our natural reason may pronounce possible, and, it may be, probable; but the truth of which never could be independently ascertained. These are the peculiar facts and doctrines of revelation, which transcend the unaided reason of man. The marks of goodness in such doctrines may be discovered by man's reason; but still the *truth* of the doctrine is supposed to transcend his powers. The office of the miracle is, to step in and vouch the truth of that which mere human reason may pronounce possible or probable. A distinct positive function is thus assigned to the miracle, while any thing like a vicious circle is avoided."*

* Journal of Sacred Lit., No. 3., page 224.

The “*circle*” referred to is, of course, that of proving the *doctrine* by the *miracle*, and the *miracle* by the *doctrine*. But, with all due deference to such an authority, it does not seem to me that by any such distinctions the circle is obliterated. Without at all launching into enlarged discussion, let a remark or two on each of the three classes of doctrine suffice.—*First*, as to the *bad*—i. e. what is pronounced bad by our moral sense. It is here said that “such a doctrine *may be accompanied by a miracle*; but the miracle is *not a true one*; that is, it is *not from God*.”—One is apt to think that the “*that is*” here is meant to *define* a *true* miracle as being *a miracle that is from God*. But it is not so. According to the theory, a miracle may be a true miracle that is *not* from God:—for the theory maintains the possible *miraculous interference of evil agents*,—that is, the production by such agents of true miracles—of “real violations of the laws of nature.” The statement, therefore, ought to have been—that, when the doctrine which the miracle accompanies is to our moral sense *bad*, the miracle, *though a true one*, is to be regarded as *not from God*. Thus the miracle is a *true* miracle—really supernatural, and really wrought,—and yet it is *no proof*. In this case, therefore, we *test the miracle by the doctrine*. This is the *one side* of the circle.—Then, *secondly*, as to the *good*:—“When the doctrine is one which, by the natural light we possess, is *obviously good*, those miracles which accompany it are

to be regarded as from God." Now, in this case, while we might press the question *cui bono?*—of what great use are the miracles, if, without them, the doctrine is ascertained to be "obviously good?"—we prefer viewing it as an exemplification of *both sides* of the circle:—the doctrine proves the divinity of the miracle; and the miracle, of course, proves, reciprocally, the divinity of the doctrine.—Then, as to the *third*—the *indifferent*. This is said to be "the appropriate sphere for the action of miracles." And we are not at all disposed to dispute the position, that the "peculiar facts and doctrines of revelation"—(of which the latter are based upon the former)—may have in them such "marks of goodness" as to render them possible and probable, while yet, from their very nature, they require other descriptions of evidence to *certify* them as *divinely true*. We have here, therefore, the *other side* of the circle—the *doctrine tested and proved by the miracle*.—Thus we have the entire circle—both its sides, and its complete circumference; doctrine the test of miracle,—miracle the test of doctrine,—and doctrine and miracle reciprocally the tests of each other.—Without at all questioning what we rather hold as an important truth,—that internal and external evidences may coalesce, and mutually sustain each other,—how much more simple and satisfactory, on the point we are now discussing, is the position, that no true miracle, appealing to and tested by the senses of men, ever was, or ever could be, performed

but by divine power or divinely employed agency, and that none, therefore, ever was performed but in support of truth—and hence, that of truth and divine authority every miracle is a direct attestation.

SECTION III.

OTHER PASSAGES EXAMINED ON THE SAME QUESTION—WHETHER, IN ANY CASE, MIRACLES WROUGHT IN ATTESTATION OF FALSEHOOD WERE REAL.

In this section, I resume the consideration of such passages in Scripture as have been thought to countenance the *reality* of the miracles—or of some of them at least—wrought in attestation of false claims and false doctrines. Of these there are several in the New Testament; to the interpretation of which the same general principles might be applied, which have been applied to that from Moses, discussed in Section I. Such, for example, is that in Matt. xxiv. 24—which relates to the many pretenders to the Messiahship who were to appear between the close of the life of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem;—"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders: insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."—It ought, I think, to be self-evident, that if these "great signs and wonders" were to be *genuine miracles*,—it would amount, as in the former case, to a subversion of the evidence of miracles altogether; and a subversion of it too

By the authority of Jesus,—who yet so uniformly, and so entirely, without the slightest encumbrance of perplexing distinctions, makes his appeal to them in support of his own claims.—If by these “false Christs” *real miracles* were to be performed,—it would have been vain for his followers to say that *his had preceded theirs*, and had thus previously settled the question. The latter, supposing them *real*, would inevitably neutralize the former. As far as they went, the two would mutually destroy each other. The opposing claims, being attested by the same description of evidence, must either be *both true* or *both false*. It is, in the nature and reason of things impossible, that Jesus could mean to say that *genuine* miracles,—and *great* ones too,—were to be wrought by these pretenders to Messiahship; for this would amount to his assigning to their claims the same evidence with that on which he had rested his own. It would amount to making him say,—(and could anything be more futile?)—“You must believe *my* miracles:—but, although I do not deny that theirs will be as real as mine, you must not believe *theirs*!” This, of course, would have been mere mockery; inasmuch as, the very same ground, just inverting the order, might have been taken by his rivals.—Nor can we for one moment imagine, that, in a case of such superlative importance,—a case, in which interests so vast, both human and divine, were concerned,—the ascertainment of the truth could ever have been allowed to

turn on a mere balance of the comparative *magnitude* of the miracles on the one side and on the other, both being admitted to be equally *real*:—the more especially that, in regard to the comparative magnitude of such works, there might be room for no little diversity of judgment,—one description of the wonderful striking and impressing one mind, or one class of minds, and other descriptions others.

And here—in regard to the case of these “false Christs”—our principle of interpretation is in full agreement with recorded *facts*. The parties prospectively referred to were, in *all* respects, mere pretenders; in their *proofs* quite as much as in their *claims*. The language of our Lord is best explained by a reference to what, in the subsequent history, actually took place. What were the “great signs and wonders” which were “shown” by these rivals of the claims of Jesus?—One of them, taking advantage of the extremity of distress to which, at the time, his wretched countrymen were reduced, to practise upon their credulity,—or being himself, possibly, in common with others, the subject of a visionary fanaticism,—gave out the promise, that, on conducting his followers to the Jordan, the river would part before them, as in the days of Joshua.—Another engaged to cause the wall of the city to fall down, as in the case of Jericho.—A third, in more general terms, announced that he would show them “signs and apparitions.”—But I need not tell the intelligent reader, that all this was either mere gasconade, or the delusion

of a sanguine and superstitious imagination, or a well-timed appeal to the credulity of famine and wretchedness. No divine power interposed to roll back, or to "part hither and thither," the waters of Jordan. The walls of Jerusalem obeyed not the voice of the self-deceived or dissembling impostor,—but were destined to fall by a very different power,—even by the hands of those divinely commissioned destroyers, by whom the words of the *true* Messiah were to be verified—"They shall not leave one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."—There might be—there probably were, though not recorded—other kinds of "signs and wonders"—*given forth*—(for such is properly the import of the original word) and possibly too *done*,—resembling, in all likelihood, those magical arts by which Simon Magus "bewitched" the people of Samaria,—and thus making strikingly apparent the credulous readiness with which men will give their ear and their faith to the most manifest impositions, when they are in harmony with the natural likings of their hearts,—and the obstinacy of unbelief with which they will witness miracles the most incontestably divine, when wrought in support of what mortifies their pride, opposes their sinful and worldly desires, and frustrates their earthly-minded and fondly-cherished anticipations.

The only other passage in the New Testament, which I shall, for a few moments, bring under notice—is 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10, "Even him, whose

coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”—This passage contains within itself its own explanation; and an explanation in exact accordance with the principles we have been laying down. The wonders referred to in it are expressly called “*lying wonders*.”—And here, there are two remarks to which I wish the reader’s attention.—The *first* is—that, whereas the epithet *lying* appears, in our translation, in connexion with the *last* only of the three nouns,—“with all power, and signs, and *lying* wonders,”—it ought, in strict propriety, to be understood as characterising all the three. The literal rendering is—“*with all power, and signs, and wonders of a lie* ;” meaning that the “power” is lying power, the “signs” lying signs,—as well as the “wonders” lying wonders. Our *second* remark is, that the designation “lying wonders” is not to be understood as meaning *real miracles* which *attested a lie* : but wonders which *themselves*, as well as what they attest, *are lies*.—By some critics, I am aware, it is interpreted in the former sense. A writer to whom I have already referred, (Trench) says :—“They are ‘*lying* wonders,’ not because in themselves frauds and illusions, but because they are wrought in support of the kingdom of lies.”—Thus too Dr. Cumming, though not so decidedly :—“lying signs and wonders—not so much false

ones as *τερασι ψευδους*, signs or wonders authenticating a lie.* From this view I very decidedly dissent, on the grounds already stated, and which will still more fully come out ere we have done. I believe in no such thing as any real miracles having ever been wrought “to support the kingdom of lies;”—which, in my apprehension, would be the attaching of the divine signature to falsehood: and, both on the grounds alluded to, and on grammatical grounds, I conceive that the correct translation of the words before us would be—“with all *fictitious* power, and signs, and wonders;”—all pretended, not real; and in this, as well as all other respects, worthy of the “prince of darkness,” and the father of lies.†

* Lect. on Romish Miracles—p. 96.

† The words in the original are—*εν παση δυναμι, και σημειοις, και τερασι ψευδους*. Bloomfield says—“The expression *ψευδους* is intended for all three. In the next words—*και εν παση απατη της αδικιας*—other modes are adverted to by which Antichrist and his agents and abettors will endeavour to advance their cause; namely, “by every *other* unrighteous deceit and fraud, as well as that of *pretended miracles*.”—Doddridge translates—“by all lying power, and signs, and wonders:”—Boothroyd—“with all false miracles, and signs, and wonders:”—M^cKnight—“with all power, and signs, and miracles of falsehood”—adding, in a note on the verse,—“The structure of this sentence requires that *ψευδους* be joined not only with (*τερασι*) *miracles*, but with (*δυναμι* and *σημειοις*) *power* and *signs*.”—Schleusner takes the same view of the miracles, as not merely attesting a lie, but *themselves feigned* for purposes of deceit:—“*και σημειοις και τερασι ψευδους*—et miraculis falsis, meris prestigatorum artibus, eo

SECTION IV.

THE CASE OF THE EGYPTIAN MAGICIANS.

In the close of last Section, I might have shown how the principles of interpretation applied to the case of the false Christs at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and to that of the "Man of sin" in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, admitted of equally just application to what is said of the "miracles" of Antichrist in the Book of Revelation. They are all represented as wrought to *deceive*, and as actually *deceiving* them that dwell upon the earth. Now I hold that no true miracle ever could have either such a purpose, or such an effect. But the applicability of the principles seemed sufficiently obvious, to justify my leaving it to the reader, for the avoidance of needless prolixity, to make the application;—their reasonableness having been already vindicated.—I proceed therefore, in this Section, to the only other Scripture case on which I deem it needful to offer any lengthened comment:—for, if a satisfactory solution can be given (as I am confident it may) of the seeming

consilio excogitatis, ut homines decipiantur:"—and so *Parkhurst*—"τετρασι ψευδους—false, fictitious, pretended miracles:"—and *Robertson*—"σημειοις και τετρασι ψευδους = ψευδισι—false, deceiving." I admit, however, that this last may mean, not that they are themselves *unreal*, but that they *tell a lie*—bear testimony to falsehood.

difficulties connected with it,—(difficulties by which some have been not a little, though we hope to show groundlessly, startled)—there will be no occasion for entering on the discussion of more. It is the case of *the Magicians of Egypt*, in their contest with the messengers of Jehovah—Moses and Aaron.

In taking up this case, I must assume the reader's acquaintance with its historical details, in the Book of Exodus ;—with the characters and pretensions of such persons as the magicians in those countries and times ;—as well as with the circumstances of the two opposite parties, and their views and objects respectively. It might, in some respects, be helpful to our argument to enter into some statements on these topics ; but it is not essential. The case itself contains its own explanation.

I set out, then, with avowing my full conviction, that, in the doings of Jannes and Jambres, and their associates, there was NO REALITY OF MIRACLE,—NOTHING THAT REQUIRED THE INTERPOSITION OF EITHER DIVINE OR SATANIC AGENCY—NOTHING BUT WHAT CAME WITHIN THE SCOPE OF HUMAN POWER AND DEXTERITY OF DECEPTION.—This is the position, which, with *Farmer* and some other writers, I unhesitatingly take up. And I hope, without much difficulty, to satisfy the reader of its correctness.

1. I begin, then, by calling to his remembrance *one general fact* ; namely, that the performances of the magicians *went only a certain length* :—that,

having succeeded thus far, *they stopped, and gave in, —acknowledging their inability to go farther ; and we then hear no more of their attempts.*—Now, this single fact—independently, for the present, of the cause of their stopping, which may by and by appear,—renders it, in no small degree, *previously probable*, that there was in the case nothing superhuman or preternatural,—but simply a power of deception, which succeeded to a certain extent, and then felt itself baffled. Had the power been supernatural, and its doings realities, there seems nothing, at the particular point where they did stop, to account for their so stopping. We shall see, on the other hand, how naturally their stopping is accounted for on what we believe to be the true hypothesis.

2. The supposition of *real miracle* on the side of the magicians, as well as on that of Moses and Aaron, involves, in itself, ideas too monstrous to admit of my being able to regard them—I do not say merely as *probable*, but as *morally possible*.—Of those who hold the wonders to have been real, they are by some ascribed to the agency of *God himself*, and by others to that of *Satan*.—Now, just look at each hypothesis. According to the former, the great God is represented as, for a time, alternately, contradicting himself;—affirming and denying—attesting and disproving—the same thing;—putting forth his power, now on the side of truth and now on that of error; and thus, by his own authority, accredited by his own divine seal, keeping the minds

of his intelligent creatures in a state of dubiety and suspense as to the side on which truth lay:—according to the other, HE—the infinite Creator—appears engaged in a kind of trial of strength—a contest of power—real strength, real power—with the god of this world—the Devil; a trial, in which, for a while, it remains dubious which of the two has the mastery; nay in which, in the *first* step at least, Satan has clearly the advantage.—Now to me, I confess, it appears, that we ought to be prepared to accept of almost *any* hypothesis, which promised to free us from suppositions so unworthy and revolting! If the magicians *really* converted their rods into living serpents,—this first miracle, let it be remembered, is a miracle of *creation*—of instantaneous creation:—and—were there any room for comparison in the case of *creative* power (to which, as formerly remarked, the production of a world is as easy as the production of an atom)—the *amount* of the miracle was on the side of the magicians, in the ratio of their number—whatever we may fancy it to have been—to *one*.—And the way in which this objection to their hypothesis has been disposed of by the abettors of the *reality* of the transformation in the one case as well as in the other, has ever, I confess, appeared to me to have more of the *ludicrous* in it, than, in what relates to sacred things, I am fond of allowing my mind to dwell upon. It is very true, it has been said, that the rods of the magicians were as really as that of Moses turned

into serpents:—but then—the serpent that had come of the rod of Moses settled the controversy on the right side, by swallowing up all the rest!—As if the actual change of lifeless bits of wood into real living serpents were not a miracle incomparably greater than, after they had been produced, one of them devouring the others! How many there were of the rods of the magicians, we have no means of ascertaining. We are sure of *two*—those of “Jannes and Jambres,” who are mentioned by Paul as having “withstood Moses;”—but there might be, and probably were, more,—(perhaps not a few more,—for it is said “they cast down *every man* his rod”)—of whom these were the chief.—I do not deny, be it observed, that the swallowing up of the other serpents by that of Moses *was* a settling of the point in dispute:—but, not in the way of determining the question of *superiority* between the miracles on the one side and those on the other, on the supposition of *both being equally real*,—but in the way of determining the *reality* of the one and the *juggling legerdemain* of the other. But in truth, there is no room for *hypothesis* in the matter. A brief glance at the facts of the case may suffice to show its true character. Observe, then—

3. In the narrative, it is repeatedly said, that “the magicians *did so* with their enchantments.”—The phrase has by some been interpreted as meaning that they actually and substantially *did the same thing*. But it has no such meaning. It means no

more than that they did *in like manner*; that they effected *a resemblance*,—and such a resemblance as proved sufficient to satisfy the minds of Pharaoh and his servants, which were abundantly predisposed to be satisfied,—and so to harden their hearts, and keep them from yielding what they were naturally so loath to yield. Even had the expression been that they *did* the thing,—we are all sufficiently aware how common it is, when we are speaking of the tricks of jugglers, to describe them as *doing* what they so palpably *appear to do*.—But, if any should shake their heads in doubt upon this point, we have in reserve a thorough settler for it. Just look at one passage—Exod. viii. 18—“And the magicians DID SO with their enchantments, to bring forth lice; AND THEY COULD NOT.”—This is enough, surely. In *this* occurrence of it, the phrase means *even less* than we have been interpreting it to mean. We have interpreted it as meaning their *producing a resemblance*:—but *this* occurrence of it does not go even thus far; but signifies their *attempting* to produce a resemblance, and *failing*. Surely no proof can be more complete than this, that the phrase “THEY DID SO” does not mean their actually effecting the same thing:—“they DID SO; but they COULD NOT:”—that is, they tried, but did not succeed. The attempt, therefore, on their part, was not an attempt to do *the very thing* they saw done; but to produce such a resemblance to it, as might satisfy those, whom they well knew to

be far from hard of conviction.—Then observe further—

4. That no doubt might be left about the real meaning, it is uniformly added—"The magicians did so WITH THEIR ENCHANTMENTS."—This ought to be decisive. The original term has been variously derived by etymologists. But in either the one or the other of its two principal derivations,—the one from a root signifying to *hide*,—the other from a root signifying to *dazzle*,—it is expressive of those arts by which, on the one hand, they contrived to *hide* or *conceal*,—or those by which, on the other, they endeavoured to *dazzle*:—hiding their tricks from the eyes of spectators, or deceiving their vision by a glare thrown over it for the purpose,*—or by any other deceptive process.—When, therefore, it is alleged, that they are represented, in the Bible narrative, as *doing the very same things* with Moses, —the allegation is *not true*. All that is said is, that they did *in like sort*,—and that they did so "*with their enchantments*," or *juggleries*. It has been said—If these things were done by any thing of the nature of juggling or legerdemain,—how comes it that Moses has given no hint of it?—No hint of it! we reply:—why he has expressly—in so many words—said it, over and over and over again.—Reflect now—

5. How exactly, and satisfactorily, the view we thus take of the case, *accords with all the facts*.—

* *Scotticè*—a *glamour*.

In the *first* place:—There was nothing done that, to any who are at all acquainted with the amazing arts of such professors of necromancy, and magic, and sleight of hand, will be regarded *as at all beyond belief*.—For example:—take the *first* miracle. Moses simply casts down his rod before Pharaoh; and it becomes a serpent. A message is sent by the king for the magicians. We cannot doubt that, when they got the message, they got, at the same time, intelligence of what had been done by Moses, and of the design for which they were wanted. They were thus put upon the alert. They had time to make the necessary preparations for counterfeiting the miracle. And when they made their appearance, it is said of them that “*they did in like manner with their enchantments.*” Moses had used *no* enchantments,—no covered arts. *They did.* And by what is said to be no unusual trick with sleight-of-hand practitioners in Eastern countries to this day, they produced the appearance of the same transformation; when, in point of fact, instead of *real transformation*, there was nothing more than a clever undiscernible *substitution*.—In the East this trick is often effected by the taming of serpents, and the extracting of their stings. And very extraordinary accounts are given,—yet not less well-authenticated than extraordinary,—of the powers of serpent-charmers. Such accounts are given, not by inferior travellers only,—of whom some, by drawing a long bow, have brought discredit, in many in-

stances most unmerited, upon the whole tribe, and have rendered "*travellers' stories*" a phrase of proverbial sarcasm; but by those of the highest order, and by missionaries, of the most conscientiously truthful and thoroughly attested character.—"Facts equally wonderful," observes the Rev. Walter Scott, in his erudite and able work on the existence and agency of Evil Spirits, "Facts equally wonderful, or even more so, are frequently performed with serpents, as well as in other ways, by Indian jugglers, to this day. Nay, some more difficult are exhibited by professors of legerdemain, or of natural magic, in our own country. Surely it would be more easy for them to cause the Egyptians to suppose that they changed their rods into serpents, than for jugglers amongst us to cause spectators to imagine that they can eat or spit fire, or swallow knives or swords, or change an egg into a beautiful bird, singing most delightfully,—and again transform it into an egg; or that they can stand the discharge of a musket loaded with ball, without being injured. I must maintain that some of these things require much greater skill and dexterity than would be required to enable the Egyptian magicians to substitute a serpent for a rod, in such a way, that ignorant and credulous spectators would think that the latter had been changed into the former."*

Then—*secondly*:—we have the miracle of the

* Congregational Lecture, pp. 219, 220.

blood.—Let my reader bear now in mind, how matters stood. The waters of the river, of the lakes and ponds and tanks, as well as all the water of their filtering vessels, throughout the land of Egypt, had been turned to blood. Mark the difference. Moses simply stretches out his rod; and the stupendous wonder follows, on a scale by which every possibility of deception, it is useless to say, was precluded,—and, at the same time, all reasonable question silenced, as to the power by which it was effected. The magicians, of course, could not do *this*. It was already done. And the blood—observe—was not first re-converted into water; and then their power left to make trial of itself upon the same scale. No, no. When was it that “the magicians *did so* with their enchantments?” Why, it was when the blood was so abundant, that the chief difficulty must have been to find as much water as to make the experiment on even the smallest possible scale! Is there the slightest difficulty in conceiving a deception effected in an extent so very limited as this?—the simple deception of either changing the colour of a little water so as to make it resemble blood,—or of substituting, by their legerdemain, a portion of the water already turned to blood, of which there was so sad a profusion prepared for their use, and ready at their hand?—Or is there any difficulty in believing, that, when they had effected this little bit of sorry mimickry, the infatuated monarch would be easily enough persuaded that they *could do more*?

Then—*thirdly*:—look at the next miracle—that of the frogs. The same general remarks are equally applicable to it. In this case, as in the former, it could be on a very small scale only that the imposition could be practised:—and here too, by a power above theirs, the means had been amply provided for their purpose. Where could be the difficulty of “*bringing up frogs*,” when, from end to end, the land was full of them?—when they had found their way into houses, and bed-chambers, and ovens, and kneading-troughs?—The king’s heart, as before said, was predisposed to a favourable interpretation of all they did:—and in such circumstances,—with the material so abundantly furnished wherewith to practise their deception, and with a mind so credulous on which to work, how could they fail of success? They must have been wretched bunglers at their profession, if they had.—Let it now be noticed—

6. That our principle of interpretation accords, not only with the nature of the cases in which they succeeded, but *most remarkably with the circumstances of that in which they failed, and came to a stand*.—Let us look at these. They are especially striking.—The case in which they thus failed, and were constrained to give in, and own themselves baffled,—was the *fourth* in the series of miracles,—the miracle of the *lice*.—On the lifting up of the wonder-working rod, and smiting with it the dust of the earth, the narrative, in strong terms, says—“All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became

lice;—and there were lice upon man and upon beast.”—Now—mark it well. Thus far the magicians had succeeded. Here they are set fast. It is *now* that it is said of them; “they DID so with their enchantments, to bring forth lice; BUT THEY COULD NOT.”—The question naturally suggests itself—*How comes this?* Is there, in *this* miracle any greater difficulty than in those which preceded it?—Was there not the same abundant provision, in this case as in the others, for facilitating deception? Or, if there was *reality* in the effects produced, was the power which had “brought up the frogs” not sufficient to bring up the lice? Or, shall we say, that at this particular point God saw meet to withdraw the exercise of his own power, or to curb and frustrate that of the Evil Spirit?—There is no need for any such suppositions. There is a much simpler and more satisfactory way of answering the inquiry after the cause, and solving the difficulty. The two following facts are amply sufficient for the purpose.—1. In all the previous cases, the magicians had *pre-intimation* of what was about to be done, and, in this way, had *time to prepare*. It appears from the narrative, that the other miracles had been previously announced, as about to be executed, if Pharaoh persisted in withholding his assent to the people’s departure. But *this* miracle, the record bears, was ordered by Jehovah, and executed by Moses and Aaron, at the moment, and upon the spot—without an interval, and without the separa-

tion of the parties. Is it not then a singular circumstance that it should have been *just then* they were constrained to give in,—and to say, “This is the finger of God!”—It is still said of them, that they “did so with their enchantments.” They made a feint at it, by the use of their ordinary terms of incantation and arts of jugglery;—but for want of preparation, the trick was bungled, and failed. And then—2. The loathsome vermin were “upon man and upon beast.” The magicians themselves, in their own persons, were, equally with others, the victims of this vile, humiliating, and tormenting plague. How in these circumstances was it possible for them to make it appear that they had produced them! And, accordingly, this very circumstance seems to be assigned in the narrative, as one at least of the causes why the magicians were, in this instance, foiled, and felt themselves incapable of presenting any thing like a plausible counterfeit of the miracle. Being themselves subjects of the plague, they could not have the face to persist.—The principal reason, however, of their now surrendering and owning their incompetency, appears to have been the one first mentioned. Well too might they have been getting tired of such a contest; which they could not but be sensible was so unequal a one. Every time that, in their diminutive way, they imitated one plague, it proved only the occasion of another following. What was to be the end of it? And this leads me to my seventh and last observation:—

7. How extraordinary the fact,—that the power, whatsoever it was, which appeared thus as an antagonist power to Jehovah's, was never appealed to by the king,—and was never, by those who possessed it, put forth,—*for the removal or mitigation of any of the plagues!* How came it, that this power, supposed to be exerted with real efficiency, is always introduced *to add to the evil*, never *to take it away*?—I have characterized this as very extraordinary. And was it not so? One should have imagined, that the very first thing of which the king and his courtiers and his people would have thought and would have set their hearts upon, would have been to call for the power of the magicians, to *counteract* the power of Moses and Aaron, not to *help* it;—to *command away* the successive evils, not to *augment* them;—and that to the magicians themselves, had they really possessed any such power as has been ascribed to them, the very first thing that would have occurred would have been the exercise of that power in mitigating the pressure of woe after woe upon their people and their land. Pharaoh, at all events, might reasonably have been expected to say to them—“I don't want you, and have not sent for you, to set your wits and your power to work, in *doing the same thing*:—we have got, in all conscience, more than enough of it already. If you possess any power sufficient to enable you to compete with these strangers, and with the God whose messengers they profess to be,—pray put it forth, if you please, *in coun-*

teraction. These are *plagues* and *curses*:—DON'T ADD TO THEM;—TAKE THEM AWAY."—And few things can more strikingly evince the predisposition of the king's heart to admit deception, to allow himself to be duped and gulled by imposture, than this very circumstance.—His magicians, however, were quite incompetent for any thing of the kind. When each of the successive plagues is to be removed, the mortifying petition must be presented to Moses and Aaron, for the intervention of the same power by which it had been inflicted. The God that brought it must be prayed to, to take it away! By Jehovah it had been sent:—by Jehovah alone it could be removed. And the Egyptians thus were made to see and to feel, both his power to smite, and his power to heal. But all in vain. King and people hardened their hearts.—As for the magicians, nothing is to me more manifest than that their pretended power was ALL IMPOSTURE. There were "enchantments"—juggleries—feats of legerdemain—and various modes of deception; by which, for a time, they succeeded in producing the semblance of a corresponding miracle. But that was all. They soon failed; and were glad, I cannot doubt, of an excuse for backing-out from a contest with a power, before which, they could not but soon come to feel that they were nothing. And, in the language of Paul, "the folly" of Jannes and Jambres and their associates, became "manifest to all men."

And so, ultimately, must the folly of all who are

found “fighting against God.” “Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth:—woe to the man that striveth with his Maker!”—“He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength:—who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?”—And hence (I repeat) the unspeakable importance, and the imperative obligation, of every man examining, seriously and thoroughly, with an humble and a candid spirit, **WHETHER THIS BOOK CONTAINS HIS COUNSELS.** If it does, those counsels are counsels which nothing could dictate but infinite benevolence. Our salvation—our eternal well-being—is their avowed object. And all the miracles recorded here are the forth-puttings of divine **POWER** to recommend the acceptance of divine **MERCY.** They have thus a bearing upon a deliverance infinitely more valuable than that from Egyptian bondage; present and everlasting deliverance from the bondage, the guilt, and all the penal consequences of sin.—“If thou be wise, then, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.”

CHAPTER VII.

RATIONALISM:—MYTHISM:—SPIRITUALISM:—ROMANISM.

SECTION I.

THE VIEW OF MIRACLES HELD BY GERMAN RATIONALISTS.

THE self-idolizing intellect of the day, in its peculiar and pedantic terminology, is fond of distinguishing the inventors and propagators of novel theories in psychological, moral, or theological science, by the becomingly modest designation of "GREAT THINKERS." The application of the high-sounding title has made it abundantly manifest, that a man may be a *great* thinker without being a particularly *wise* thinker. The two, one should conceive, ought, in all propriety, to be synonymous. But, instead of being always significant of wisdom, the former seems many a time to denote no more than originality and extravagance; to be used, indeed, much in the same way as when we familiarly speak of "*great nonsense*." When any man takes a fancy to get himself ranked among these "great thinkers," he must set his plodding brain to excogitate some-

thing that is out of all the ordinary and old-fashioned courses of thought,—something of his own,—something that has never before found its way into any other human intellect. Now, from such a source,—from a mind under the influence of such a dominant desire, there is no great reason to expect any thing very sound—any thing bearing the impress of good common sense—to emanate. The *a priori* probability is, the framing and issuing of some system of wild and airy abstractions,—mystical speculations,—which owe their seeming depth only to their muddiness, and of which the shallowness would at once be apparent, could they but be subjected to a process of filtration. Thus has it been in regard to the subject before us, as with regard to not a few others.

There are two theories, respecting Christian miracles, which have owed their origin to that richly productive soil of “great thinkers”—the *German* school:—and they have been imported into our own country, by such as emulate for themselves the like envied, though in our estimation unenviable, distinction. The one is the system of RATIONALISM—(a designation, by the way, in felicitous keeping with the high-mindedness just adverted to,—implying, as it does, its being the only system in accordance with right reason)—otherwise called *naturalism* and *anti-supernaturalism*, from its setting itself against everything in the gospel miracles *above nature*,—beyond the ordinary operation of

second causes, and undertaking to account for them all on merely *natural* principles;—principles, the ignorance of which might impart to their results a miraculous aspect—but an aspect of which the miraculous character would vanish as soon as they came to be known.—Now, the possibility, in certain cases, and to a certain extent, of such an effect arising from such a cause, it would be foolish to question. Thus, for example; were any man, at Dover, on this side of the English channel, intimating to a person who knew nothing whatever about the modern mode of electrical communication, and who was ignorant even of the very properties of the electric fluid on which this wonder of our times is founded,—that he would despatch a message to Calais, and receive an answer, within five minutes,—the said person might either laugh at his informer as himself a fool, or be angry with him for imagining *him* one. But if, on the instant, the thing were done,—without his having the least conception *how*,—it would to him, naturally enough, bear the appearance of miracle; although miracle there was none.—But the attempt to account, by the operation of natural causes alone, without any intervention of divine power, for the multiplicity of wonders, in all their variety, recorded in the New Testament narratives, or even for the comparatively few of which the particulars are given in detail,—is too extravagant,—too monstrous an outrage on the common sense of mankind,—to be admitted by any one possessed of even but a slender

modicum of that valuable attribute;—to be admitted, indeed, by any but those “great thinkers” themselves, and such of their admirers as covet a share in their reputation. It seems, at times, as if the greatness of the thinking were measured by the greatness of the amount of absurdity and contradiction it was capable of imagining possible:—for assuredly, that such facts as those recorded should all have been the product of the operation, in the ordinary way, of the ordinary laws and processes of nature, would itself be a more astonishing wonder than their being the result of the immediate and supernatural intervention of divine power, for a divine end!—Who, in his sober senses, can fancy the instantaneous healing, by a word or a touch, of the most inveterate bodily diseases, defects, and mutilations, and that without failure in a single instance out of hundreds and thousands;—the creative augmentation of five loaves of bread into a sufficient supply for the cravings of “five thousand men, besides women and children,” and the leaving of a residue larger than the original provision;—the conversion of many gallons of pure water into choice wine by an inward volition, discovered only from the result;—the instantaneous calming of the furious tempest and raging deep by the utterance of “Peace, be still;”—the raising of the dead to life, in one case where the last breath had just been drawn, in another when the corpse was on the bier on the way to the tomb,—and in a third, when the dead had lain four days in

the grave, and had already, according to all ordinary laws, become putrescent;—who, I say, in his sober senses, can bring himself to regard such facts as these as having been, on the supposition of their *reality* (which by those of whom I now speak is not denied) anything else than supernatural and miraculous?—Or what ordinary natural laws, or secondary causes, can account for the great fact, formerly considered at large, of his own resurrection?—a fact, recorded, as we have seen, in all its marvellous circumstances, with that inimitable simplicity, which is the sublime characteristic of truth.

I ask, with all confidence, unawed by the frankly admitted superiority of the powers and learning of these “great thinkers” (for it is not the only instance in which powers and learning have been lamentably perverted)—are men really worthy to be reasoned with, who can satisfy themselves with alleging that “the vision of Zacharias was effected by the smoke of the chandeliers of the temple:—that the magician kings (so called) with their offerings of myrrh, and gold, and incense, were three wandering merchants, who brought some glittering tinsel to the child at Bethlehem:—that the star which went before them was a servant bearing a flambeau:—that the angels, in the scene of the temptation, were a caravan traversing the desert laden with provisions, of which they ‘ministered to him:’—that Jesus did not change water into wine at Cana, but brought in a new supply of wine when that of the

house was exhausted:—that he did not multiply the loaves, but, distributing his own and his disciples' little store, set an example of liberality, which was quickly followed by others who had like stores, and in this way there was sufficient for all:—that he did not cure blindness otherwise than any skilful oculist might do it; which, indeed, they observe, is clear,—for with his own lips he declared that he needed light for so delicate an operation—‘I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work:’—that he did not walk *on* the sea, but only *by* it on the shore:—that he did not tell Peter to find a piece of money in the fish's mouth, but to catch as many fish as would sell for that money:—that he did not raise Lazarus from the dead, but guessed from the nature of his disease that he was only in a swoon, and happily found it so:—that the two angels in the tomb, clothed in white linen, were an illusion, caused by a linen garment:—and that the transfiguration was a storm?”*—a *storm!*—that scene of heavenly grandeur, whose very stillness we conceive to have been one of the elements of its sublimity,—a breathless stillness, unbroken save by the whisperings of the celestial visitants, and the divine “voice from the excellent glory.”—Or what are we to make of men who can give such scope to pure imagination, as, instead of admitting the reality of the miracle on

* See “Quinet on Strauss's Life of Jesus,” in “Voices of the Church”—p. 5:—and Trench on Miracles, page 76.

the man at the pool of Bethesda, represented as having been for thirty-eight years in a state of bodily impotence, find out (what no one during his lifetime had discovered) that he was only an impostor, who feigned infirmity,—and, in direct contradiction of the very letter of the record, which expressly says of Jesus, when he saw him lying there, “that he knew he had been now a long time in that state,”—allege that Jesus, instead of knowing this, knew him to be a cheat, and by the stern tone and manner of his command to “rise, take up his bed, and walk,” startled, as it was meant to do, the conscious impostor, and made him spring to his feet, and take himself off, bed and all?—Nay, still more—for I wish the reader to know the lengths to which these heartless theorists, without one pin-point of ground, have allowed their unbridled fancies to carry them;—what can be said, with any hope of conviction, to the man* who could allege that Christ, having effected his escape from the tomb, died of a slow fever, caused by the wounds of the nail-prints on the cross?—or of the other† who gave out the self-invented figment, that, after the passion, instead of having really died and risen again, he lived for seven and twenty years in solitude, labouring for the welfare of humanity, and then closed his life, far from the society of disciple or friend! If such are the

* Paulus—professor of dogmatic theology. Quinet—page 17—in “Voices of the Church.”

† M. Brennesche. Quinet, *Ibid.*

miserable resources to which such men have recourse, to rid the gospel narratives of all that is really miraculous,—is *rationalism*, I ask, the proper designation of their crude and baseless theories? Would it not be incomparably more consistent, and honest, and manly, at once to disown revelation, and renounce Christianity, root and branch, than thus, while continuing to bear the Christian name and profess the Christian faith, to subvert the very foundations on which that faith rests?—thus, Joab-like, to salute with the one hand, and stab with the other,—or, Judas-like, to kiss and betray?

SECTION II.

EXPLANATION OF MIRACLES BY THE MYTHS OF STRAUSS.

But another “great thinker” arose. There was need. He clearly saw that to dispose of the miracles on such grounds as these would not do: that if the facts recorded *were real*, there was no denying their miraculous character. And, perceiving the irrationality of this rationalism,—the unnaturalness of this naturalism,—he sets his wits to work, and invents what he deems “a more excellent way” for effecting the same end. And what is that way? A sufficiently bold one. With two or three shreds of exception, he denies altogether the *historical character* of the gospels. They have, indeed, the appearance of narratives; but, though artfully thrown into

that form, they are not at all a record of *facts*, but a collection of *myths*. And what, the reader may ask, is a *myth*? “*Mythology*” is defined by Johnson—“A system of fables:—explication of the fabulous history of the gods of the Heathen world.”—A *myth*, then, define it as you will, is something distinct from a *fact*. It is a *legend*, but not of anything authentic in a previous life or history:—something which in itself has no antecedent reality, but is invented, or framed out of certain existing materials, for a special purpose. According to this wild theory, then, while it is admitted that Jesus lived, and that his Apostles lived, and lived at the time assigned them,—the life of Jesus by the evangelists is to be regarded as having been *made up* by his followers subsequently to his death, in accordance with their conceptions of the Messianic character and doings; those conceptions being supposed to be derived from the Old Testament Scriptures, and from the prevalent notions of the expected Messiah among the Jews, at the period of the birth of Jesus. In the terms of an eminent German writer*—“According to the theory of Dr. Strauss, the early Christian church *made* its founder out of the Messianic conceptions entertained by the Hebrew nation at the birth of Jesus. To Jesus, in conformity with those conceptions, and indeed in consequence of them, they ascribed the power of miracles. The

* Tholuck.

Messiah was to be a great worker of miracles; and therefore Jesus, the Messiah, *did* work miracles."—But the *ascription* to him of miracles is one thing; their *reality* another:—the latter, of course, is disowned. It is to get quit of the reality, that the scheme of myths has been invented.—According to this theory, it has been tersely and truly said—"The Church created the Christ, not the Christ the Church." In this way, we have no really historical Christ or Christianity; the seeming narrative, being in truth, no narrative:—not a record of facts, but a series of fond fancies and imaginary symbols, whencesoever derived, embodying the early Christian church's conceptions of its Messianic Head.—I have called this a wild scheme. A wilder could not well be imagined.—There could hardly be a better specimen of what a recent admirable writer designates "the infinite vagaries of perverted learning."* It is just one of those things (and there are not a few of them) respecting which it is quite enough to know, that they really have found a

* "The Eclipse of Faith, or A visit to a Religious Sceptic:"—a work, of which the author had no cause to hide his blushes (unless they were those of modesty) by interposing an anonymous Title-page between him and the public. I abstain from quoting *the page*, because, if the reader, wishing to find the words in their connexion, will begin at the beginning, and read on till he comes to them, he will not stop there; and when he has come to the close, he will thank me for such a treat, both of pleasure and of profit.

hatching-nest in the inventive brain of one or other of our "great thinkers,"—and have thence, on their getting wing, obtained a ready ingress into certain other brains, of kindred idiosyncrasy, and fond of such *lusus naturae*;—but on which an old man at least may be excused for deeming it a sin to expend any immoderate proportion of the little time that is now before him.—To enter at large into it, therefore, is out of the question. And indeed we have to do with it at present, only as it bears relation to *miracles*. The following brief observations must suffice:—

1. The narratives of the Evangelists bear upon them, throughout, *all the characteristics of simple, unadorned, historical records*;—of continuous and consistent relations of events, and actions, and conversations, and discourses, and sufferings, and death, and resurrection, and ascension to heaven. From first to last—from the birth in Bethlehem till the ascent from the Mount of Olives, all bears the impress of history,—of a detail of facts; and, whether believed or not, *as history* it had been read, from the time of its publication to the world, and by every individual of that world into whose hands it had come, till this great thinker arose. And, whatever may be the amount of inventive ingenuity to which he may lay claim,—*proof* of his position there is none. Not a single fact or circumstance, in the early history of the church, can be produced, that gives even the least imaginable likelihood to such a concoction of materials into a seeming but unreal

narrative as the theory supposes. It is entirely a figment of the inventor's brain. Indeed the early history of the church, embracing the very time during which this fictitious document must have been got up, is itself a Bible narrative; and being quite as full of miracle as the other, requires for itself too the same mythical explanation. Wonderful discovery, after eighteen centuries, that these *histories*—in which times, and places, and contemporaneous persons, Gentile as well as Jewish, and coincident occurrences in various countries, and everything that could concur to stamp them with the simply narrative character—are, after all, *no histories!*

2. These *myths*—the miracles among the rest, and indeed chiefly, the miraculous being from beginning to end a pervading characteristic—were, it seems, made up subsequently, and woven into a seemingly authentic narrative, *by those who had previously believed in Jesus as the Messiah*. From such a hypothesis, what follows? Why this: that, the miracles being—not realities, but subsequently invented myths, or legendary fancies,—these followers of Jesus must first have believed him the Messiah *without evidence*,—without, at any rate, that description of evidence, to which, as Jews, they had been accustomed to look, as the sanction which, from the beginning, had been appended to every divine commission and its accompanying communication;—and their faith, moreover, while thus independent of proof, must have been in opposition to all their pre-

conceived notions, and all their predispositions and predilections, respecting the Messiah, such as, it might have been supposed, *evidence the very strongest was requisite to overcome*. They must thus have embraced without proof a Messiah who was not at all to their mind, and then have invented the evidence in behalf of such a Messiah afterwards!—combining their wits together, to suggest such particulars, and arrange and concoct them into such a document, as would set forth their notions of what the Messiah *should be*, and, by associating these with Jesus of Nazareth, put a fair face upon his claims! What will not some great thinkers fancy, rather than bend to the humiliation of taking simple truth, in fact and sentiment, as they find it!—And then—

3. What, after all, is the product? These adherents of Jesus, incorporated these *myths*, it seems, into a life of their Master, for the purpose of harmonizing his character and doings, with what the Old Testament had either directly predicted respecting the Messiah, or made it, in their estimation, desirable that he should be;—and this, of course, for the further purpose of *recommending him and his doctrine to the acceptance and submission of their countrymen*: for at what else could they aim? And what, then, have they produced? What view of the Messiah does this strange non-descript compound of mythical inventions—with its two or three solitary facts as the basis on which the whole structure is reared—present?—a view of him such as

was really fitted to bring their countrymen over to their faith?—Need I say, in every respect the reverse?—The representation of Him is one which flew in the very teeth of all their worldly notions,—all their eager anticipations of a temporal prince and an earthly and secular kingdom;—a representation such as was fitted, instead of recommending him, to ensure his indignant rejection:—unless indeed they expected, (and why not?) that, having themselves embraced him against their own predilections, and without evidence, others might prove equally reasonable!—And observe—

4. What (as already hinted) are we to make of the subsequent history, in *the Acts of the Apostles*? Must we regard *it too* as *mythical*? Miracles were not confined to the life of Jesus. They continued after him. And they are wrought by the very men who record them—or seem to record them—as having been also wrought in the life of their Master. Were they *myths*, then, in their own case, as well as in his? Let this question be answered by another. The following public appeal (before referred to in another connexion) is, in this latter history, recorded to have been made by the Apostles:—“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.”* Was this an appeal to *myths*? When the

* Acts ii. 22.

appeal was made, the alleged mythical gospels had not been published:—and to what, then, but to plain and palpable *facts*,—facts which those addressed had witnessed, and could not gainsay, is this stunning appeal made,—to some so exasperating, and to others, by the grace of God's Spirit, so convincingly overpowering? I only add—

5. If the seeming narratives of the four Evangelists, instead of being a record of facts, are, each and all, a series of mythical fictions, worked into the form of a biography,—then, independently of the difficulty of imagining the writers to have possessed that *Straussian* genius which must have been required for the invention and the working out of such a scheme, and the further difficulty of three at least out of the four hitting so much upon the same plan, and yet without the slightest symptom of collusion;—independently of these and other difficulties—we cannot but regard the production and publication of such biographies, on the supposition of the theory of their legendary or fictitious character being correct,—as having been nothing less than A COMBINATION TO DECEIVE. And a more successful one, it would not be easy to imagine:—the whole world—learned and unlearned, with few if any exceptions—having, for not much short of two milleniums, been cheated into the imagination that they were reading simple history, when they have been perusing the fictions of poetical fancy:—and, while they would have felt no hesitation in saying YES to

the question "Understandest thou what thou readest?"—having, in reality, been attaching nothing of the true meaning to any portion of it—"until that I *David Frederic Strauss* arose,—until that I arose a *Master* in Israel!"—The truth is, that, Strauss, in common with the rationalists, had previously settled in his mind the position—"miracles are an impossibility:"—and, not being satisfied with the rationalistic way of disposing of them, "necessity was laid upon him" to invent another. So he set his wits to work; and MYTH was the result. And, having hit upon the happy idea, he brought the superabundance of his genius and learning to bear upon its vindication. We must, of course, in charity, presume, that he succeeded in convincing himself. But we are at a loss to imagine how he could fail to be sensible that his argument was maintained at the expense of integrity in another and far more important quarter,—in the writers of the gospels themselves. The man who states *as facts* what he knows never to have happened, or never to have been done, acts the part of an impostor and a liar. It is vain to allege that these writers were not *conscious* deceivers; that, if they were not understood, the blame was not theirs. Conscious deceivers they *must* have been. If they were writing *myths*, they should have said so; or, at all events, have given some indication, however faint, that what they were writing was not to be literally and historically interpreted. Nothing of the kind appears. On the contrary, when anything of the

nature of *parable* is introduced, we are either expressly told, or left at no loss to understand, that such it is. All else stands as *matter of fact*. And the entire style of the writers—so unaffectedly and truthfully simple—puts it beyond a doubt, that as recording matters of fact they *intended* to be understood. And the matter-of-fact character of their narratives is not to be set aside by the gratuitous assumption, on the part of the most learned man on earth, that matters of fact *miracles could not be*.—Our position as to *rationalism*, we cannot but hold at least as decidedly in regard to *mythism*;—that it would be incomparably more consistent, and even more really dignified, to renounce Christianity altogether, than by any such process to attempt extruding all that is miraculous either from its evidence, or from those facts on which all that is of any worth in it, as a scheme of salvation, depends.—As to its *evidence*, we have more than once seen how the writers make Jesus himself appeal to his miraculous works as the proofs of his divine mission; an appeal, which, if these works were not *realities*, was itself a lie. And, as to the *facts* on which its efficacy for salvation depends, we need only repeat, that, since the resurrection of Jesus must go the same way with all the other miracles,—“*if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins.*”

It is melancholy, indeed, to see so marvellous an amount of learning and ingenuity thus worse than thrown away. The *rationalism* of *Paulus* and his

adherents, and the *mythism*, or *mythologism*, of *Strauss* and his, had their origin, as has just been hinted, from the same predetermined position,—that, be the truth of the case what it may, the *miraculous* behoves to be excluded. Come what will, there must be *no miracles*. Each adopted his own method of setting the miraculous aside. With what success, in either case, the reader must judge. To my own eye (were it not that such perversity is, alas! too common to admit of the epithet *miraculous*) both the one and the other would wear the aspect of miracles of human folly and presumption, to get rid of the miracles of divine wisdom and power.

SECTION III.

ESTIMATE OF MIRACLES BY SPIRITUALISTS.

There is still another system (if its abettors, with their horror of all "*propositions*," or articles of *belief*, will admit of its being so designated) by which miracles are ignored,—the system of *spiritualism*; so called, to indicate its opposition to every thing of the nature of *external*, or what they contemptuously style, "*book-revelation*." It affirms the existence in human nature of a "spiritual faculty," pertaining to what it calls THE SOUL, in distinction from the "pure intellect:"—a faculty, of which the dictates are surer, and more confidently to be depended on, than those of any outward revelation, by whomso-

ever given, and howsoever accredited. All such revelation is thus rendered superfluous; and, as being superfluous, to be rejected, on the ground that God does nothing in vain:—seeing the dictates of the said “spiritual faculty” require no such confirmation, supposing those of the revelation the same;—and if in any particular they are different, the said faculty possessing an authority paramount to that of the strongest possible miraculous attestation,—so that no miracle, and no amount of miracle, is to be credited in opposition to it. It thus recognizes no “special revelation.” All the revelation that man needs comes from within himself; and every man has it. The supernatural inspiration ascribed to Paul, or to any other prophet or apostle, it denies to have been such,—to have had any thing in it, that is, more than is “common to man.” Nay, (with a perversity, such as makes a near approximation to that of the rationalists when they interpret the words of Christ—“I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day”—as meaning that he needed light for the operation of couching, or what else soever might be necessary for restoring vision,)—they make Paul disclaim all such special inspiration himself, and hold out his own case as an example for us and other men to imitate:—“If we would be holy and enlightened as Paul, we must do as Paul did; not by slavishly copying the outside of his conduct, but by nourishing our inward spirit as he nourished his. He refused to learn his

religion from men, but listened to the voice of God:—and so have all the great and good men done, whose religious actions can be thankfully remembered.* Such is the use made of Paul's words, in which he so decidedly expresses his equality with other apostles, in having received his commission and his message, no less than they, by direct inspiration from the same divine source:—"I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which I preached unto you is not after man:—for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."† And in this we are to imitate him:—not taking our religion from Paul, any more than he took his from others, but, like him, listening to the Oracle within! We are not to mind what Paul says, as at all intended to be the voice of God to us by any special inspiration imparted to him, such as we do not ourselves possess; but to hearken to God's own voice speaking directly to ourselves. Thus a "book-revelation" is set aside as a useless superfluity; and with it, of course, its accompanying evidence:—seeing, if there be no need for the revelation itself, of what use can be the proofs of it!

And yet these *spiritualists*, though listening to the same Oracle within, and that Oracle in each of them divine, are far from "speaking the same things." They differ from each other. Nay, they progressively, in the "phases of their faith," differ

* Newman's "Soul," p. 179.

† Gal. i. 11, 12.

from themselves. What they believe to-day—I beg their pardon, what they have *the faith* of to-day—they are never sure they will have the faith of to-morrow. When passing from one phase of faith to another,—from one state of spiritual intuition and consciousness to another,—are all in succession the silent utterance of the same Oracle? And has it, in any of them, given its last and permanent utterance? Who can tell? They themselves? No. There has been a career of change:—and they may change yet. The Oracle, though divine, is far from giving “a certain sound.” What, then, are we to say? Is it, that at the outset of their career, the voice of the Oracle was suppressed and not listened to;—or that its secret utterances were perverted—by the biasing power of early *creed-instruction*—the sad result of *book-revelation*; and that from this bondage the Oracle has been, step by step—utterance by utterance—gradually delivering them? Then, that suggests another inquiry. Suppose we give up special revelation, and regard the Christian Scriptures as simply the product of the “spiritual faculty” in the various writers. By those spiritualists of whom we now speak it is not denied, that Christianity has been a great step in advance, in the progressive development of religious truth by the human faculties:—only it is not to be held as the extreme point of such development,—as the *Ultima Thule* of spiritual discovery. How, then, stands the case?

Writers who have set out with belief in the Christian revelation and its peculiar contents, have begun to suspect, and have ultimately come to the conviction, that this and another, and a third and a fourth, and a fifth and a sixth, article of those contents, and indeed all, or within a mere fraction of all of them, are baseless fallacies,—having in them no reality—no truth.—In such a case, we are tempted to ask, Where has been the advance? In such a province, nothing can deserve to be so called but the discovery of new truths. And if what the Christian writings contain, instead of being new truth, is no truth, but only a new phase of error; it cannot, in that case, with any consistency, be regarded as one of the stages of *progress*. The accumulation of errors could only be the occasion of growing difficulty, perplexity, and bewilderment. In setting aside Christianity, the spiritualists could not be said to be improving upon it, or getting on in advance of it. They begin *de novo*. They listen to a new authority. The Oracle of Newman silences that of Paul. They take up ground, such as the Christian Scriptures utterly repudiate. What the “inward Oracle” (supposing no *special* revelation) dictated to Peter, and Paul, and James, and John, it does *not* dictate to *them*. Whether piece-meal or at once, it sets it all aside. With all their scorn of a *book-revelation*, they give us one of their own—(or more than one, for they do not hear the Oracle alike)—to which the above-named worthies, did they

still survive, would not, most assuredly, attach their signatures, as an acknowledged advance upon theirs. And yet, for the best parts—perhaps I might say for the only good parts—of what they ascribe to their Oracle, they are in reality, consciously or unconsciously, indebted to the very *book-revelation* which they indignantly and contemptuously disown. All that is really worth they have got from it. And few things show this more strikingly than the extent to which their fond lucubrations—the alleged dictates of their own spiritual intuition—are given forth in *New Testament phraseology*. One marvels what they would have done without it; where they would have got a terminology to convey their notions. There is in this something very ungracious. They employ Bible phraseology, in exploding Bible lessons. They deck their theories in Bible beauties; and make these beauties tell against its most sacred and vital truths. They enter, with seeming devotion, the Christian sanctuary; but it is only to extinguish its lights. They present us with exquisite delineations of the inward spiritual life; delineations, of which the finest touches are supplied from the Bible, and which Paul himself might at times have mistaken for evangelical, till he was met by some heart-thrust at one or other of those great elements of spiritual belief from which, according to *his* representation of it, that life has at once its origination, its maintenance, and its growth.

In all this, they pay a high tribute to the Book which they repudiate. Nay more:—in denying that book to be at all the product of any special divine revelation, and affirming it to have proceeded from the ordinary “inward light” or “spiritual consciousness” of the writers, they present us with what may fairly be characterized as *another miracle*. We have formerly seen what a *moral* miracle is furnished by the supposition of so many witnesses bearing their testimony to a fact which they could not but know to be false, and persisting to bear it in the face of sufferings unto death in this world, and their own self-pronounced sentence of damnation in the world to come. And now we have an *intellectual* miracle—or an intellectual and moral combined—not less marvellous. Let the reader just look at it for a moment. Here is a little volume, which we call the New Testament. It has existed for eighteen centuries. How many books, in all descriptions of knowledge, have since been written, and passed into oblivion! It still survives. Yes, survives; for, in the circumstances, even that were a wonder. But that is not all. It has during all that time,—and more and more as knowledge and civilization (of whose progress, indeed, it has, to a great extent, been the cause) have advanced,—given occupation to critics, commentators, expositors, and preachers:—and, instead of being exhausted, it is affording to all of them, at this hour, “ample room and verge enough,” for the full and vigorous exercise of all

their varied powers. They are still "bringing out of its treasures new things and old." And what is more; it has called forth, and furnished employment for, the talents, in all their variety, of hosts of infidel and sceptic adversaries, who have expended upon it the shafts of wit and ridicule from ten thousand quivers,—who have brought to bear upon it whole armaments of weightier artillery,—and who, in seeking its demolition, have exhausted all the under-ground arts of sapping and mining:—and yet, here it is,—in all its unimpaired amplitude, and in all its unabated energy and influence. It is circulating in a hundred and fifty languages; and it is still, in the experience of thousands, proving itself "the power of God unto salvation," and is working its auspicious way to universal dominion. Now,—without entering into any argument from its actual contents, as compared with the results of the "wisdom of the wise" in previous ages,—that this little book should have been the unaided production chiefly of a Jewish tax-gatherer, and two or three Jewish fishermen, trained under a Jewish carpenter who himself "had never learned,"—together with a tent-maker of Tarsus, brought up at the feet of a Jewish teacher, and principally conversant with Jewish literature and traditions,—it really requires an infidel's credulity to believe. It is not a little amusing, indeed, to think of the amount of plodding trouble to which these "unlearned and ignorant men" have put even "men of renown" in

science and literature,—the vast quantity of brain of all varieties that has been expended upon them! All this is a marvel not less marvellous, surely, than the supposition of special divine inspiration!

One of the principal grounds on which our spiritualists discard miracles is, that “God speaks *from within*,”—that “faith is essentially *from within*,”—that the testimony from within is more to be trusted than any testimony from without,—than any testimony confirmed by evidence addressed to the senses;—that “no outward impressions on the eye or ear can be so valid an assurance to us of God’s will, as our inward judgment;”—“no external revelation more certain than our moral and spiritual discernments.”—Now who calls upon them to cast away, or to reverse, any clearly discerned principle of moral obligation,—aught that conscience distinctly enjoins as duty,—in compliance with any miraculously attested authority? We have already intimated our firm conviction, that no miracle ever has been, or ever could be, wrought, either to attest falsehood, or to justify crime. There may be questions, however, of moral casuistry, on which a man may form his own judgment, and rest his own conclusions, regarding them as the unsophisticated dictates of his own “moral sense,” and consequently more certain than any miracle could ever make the contrary;—while to the moral sense of another neither his judgment nor his conclusions may present themselves at all with the same indubitable

clearness. Take, for example, two of the cases specified by them,—the divine command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, and the divine injunction to the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites.—In the former case,—it is at once granted that Abraham's taking his son's life, independently of any divine command, would have been murder of the most atrocious kind. But is there no truth in the plea, that the sovereign GIVER of life must be the sovereign DISPOSER of life;—that, consequently, he may employ what instruments he will to take away what he has given;—that, on the supposition of his will being clearly intimated, even a father's taking the life of a son, in compliance with that will, ceases to be a crime, and becomes an act of self-denying and exemplary obedience? All depends, of course, on the indubitable certainty of the intimation. Now, to argue that because in *our* age and in *our* circumstances, a man would justly be considered as mad, who should affirm that he had a divine command laid upon him, whether communicated by a “voice in the air,” or by an impression upon his mind, to slay his only son,—therefore, in *his* age and in *his* circumstances, the patriarch ought to have rejected every thing assuming to be a divine communication, and, trusting to his moral consciousness, intimating the sacredness of his son's life and the natural obligation that lay upon him to preserve it, to have refused compliance,—is to proceed upon an assumption which is altogether inadmissible, the

identity, namely, of our age, and our circumstances with his:—and it is to overlook too the impossibility of God's now having any such lesson to teach *us*, as it was his gracious purpose then to teach *Abraham*;—the transaction turning out, in the end, to be, not the taking away of life, but the symbolical intimation of better life to come; giving to the venerable patriarch, as the reward of his faith, to “see Christ's day afar off—to see it, and be glad.”—And with regard to the other case—the extermination of the Canaanites, the question comes into equally brief compass. Is it right, on the part of the Supreme Ruler, to punish wicked nations,—to visit them, judicially and penally, with national calamities? Who will presume to question it? Such calamities, fearful and apparently indiscriminating, do, in his providential administration, befall communities:—

“————— He springs his mines,
And desolates a nation at a blast:”—

it may not be warrantable for us to pronounce the visitation a judicial infliction on account of special wickedness, any more than it would have been warrantable for the men of our Lord's day to pronounce “those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them” to have been “sinners above all them that dwelt in Jerusalem:”—but, if we admit the *principle* that God *may* thus inflict on nations, as such, judicial penalties,—it is enough. If the thing itself be right; if

it be right in the "Governor among the nations" to do it *directly*, must it necessarily be wrong for Him to do it *by human agency*? Granted, that for any nation to take upon itself to sit in judgment on another nation,—to determine the crisis at which the iniquity of that nation has come to the full,—and to become, on its own self-assumed authority, the executioner of the divine vengeance,—would be for that nation to incur a charge of the most impious presumption, and actually to involve itself in the guilt of wholesale murder:—yet, suppose the sentence pronouncing the cup of national iniquity full to have come from God himself,—and God himself, instead of directly inflicting the merited vengeance with his own hand, to prefer teaching another nation a lesson of his abhorrence of the evils he has resolved to punish, by commissioning them to be the executioners of the punishment;—suppose Him to issue this commission in a way that leaves no conjecture,—a way that is divinely sure,—explicitly telling the people thus engaged as his agents, and by frequent repetition impressing it on their minds, that they were to regard themselves solely in this capacity,—not as chosen to fulfil the fearful charge on account of any superior righteousness of their own, but entirely on account of the abominations practised by those whom they were commissioned to destroy, and to deter themselves from similar practices in their own future history:—suppose this—is it perfectly clear to every man's

“moral sense” that the whole procedure is wrong? —that it was impossible for God to give any such commission, and that the Israelites were in error and sin in obeying it? If any individual chooses to usurp the tribunal of the only Judge—to

“Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his justice, be the God of God,”—

“let him answer it.” He is not entitled to expect that the dictate of every moral sense must accord with that of his own. The question turns entirely on *the certainty of the divine commission*. That the commission was given in the circumstances described,—the execution of the divine vengeance having been delayed till “the iniquity of the Amorites should be full,”—is the statement of the Book:—and the *morality* of the Book must be judged of accordingly.—But even a notice thus brief of such questions of casuistry is foreign to my present subject.

If it be so, that “what God reveals to us he reveals *within*—to our moral and spiritual senses,”—then is it a fair question for us to ask—What has that inward spiritual revelation, apart from the external or book-revelation, all along been? It will not do for a man whose “moral and spiritual senses” have had all the benefit of what we believe to have been “given by” *special* “inspiration of God,” to make himself the standard specimen of what these

“senses” are in the unenlightened race. When such a man says—“No book-revelation can (without sapping its own pedestal) authoritatively dictate laws of human virtue, or alter our *a priori* view of the divine character,”—we ask, What means he by the pronoun OUR? Will he presume to say what *his* “*a priori* views of the divine character” would have been, independently of the light of that very book-revelation?—and does not that amount to the same thing with asking, whether, having been trained up in that light, he has ever had any views of the Divine character that can be called *a priori* views at all? What have been the *a priori* conceptions of God and of divine things which human nature, without that light, has ever entertained? If indeed “our certainty of divine truth cannot be more certain than the veracity of our inward organs of discernment,”—what, in such circumstances,—what, without that light,—has been the product of these “inward organs of discernment?” Was there ever a question, in any one department of knowledge, to which the principle of *induction*,—applied in its fullest extent—to all ages and to all nations—yields a clearer or more certain answer? Was there ever a position more fully made out, when tested by that experimental criterion, than the position—“the world by wisdom knew not God?” Look, for an answer, to all the forms of Heathen mythology,—the worst and the best. What do we find, but the

extremes of pitiful and humiliating folly, or of debasing and disgusting vileness;—or, if we rise to the speculations of philosophy, what but dim and dubious guesses at truth, mixed up with inconsistencies and errors, and all uncertain and uninfluential?—while, even with regard to the nearest approximations to the true, it is not sure whether, instead of being the direct dictate of the “inward Oracle,”—the “inward light,”—the “moral and spiritual consciousness,”—they might not be the corrupted remnants of early traditions, or partial and tattered shreds of truth that had found their way from a land of *book-revelation*?—The plain truth is,—as the entire history of human religions authorises our believing,—that, but for that book-revelation, Jewish of old and subsequently Christian, “the world by wisdom” would not have “known God” yet. To this hour, all the world over, men would have been “changing the glory of the incorruptible God into images made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things, and worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator,—who is blessed for ever.” It was such a state of things,—threatening the utter exclusion of God from his own creation,—manifesting a tendency to retrogression rather than to advance,—a progress to grosser darkness rather than to opening and growing light,—that rendered a *special* or *book* revelation necessary,—a revelation, attested to be from God by palpable and unmistakeable

signs. The light from within having failed,—having proved itself “darkness,”—that darkness could not otherwise be dispelled than by light from without. And to authenticate the divine source of this light was the use of miracles.

But what do I say? I must not forget that by the abettors of the system of spiritualism, all these diversities in religious belief and worship are held as of very little account. There is to be found, in each and all of them, the “*religious sentiment*”—the “*absolute religion*.” They make a distinction between the *pure intellect* and the *soul*; and a corresponding distinction between *belief* and *faith*. *Belief* pertains to the *intellect*; *faith* to the *soul*. There may thus, according to their arbitrary and most unscriptural use of Scripture terms, be the firmest belief where there is no faith; and there may be genuine faith, whatever be the nature of the belief. The views of the Divine Being may be ever so erroneous,—ever so opposite to truth;—the object of worship may be the *creature* or the *Creator*;—the sun or the moon;—a “four-footed beast or a creeping thing;”—the trunk of a tree, or the same trunk carved into an image the most grotesque, the most horribly savage, or the most obscenely and hideously loathsome;—the statue of some deified man or woman; or the symbol of some real vice or fancied virtue;—one or other or all of these and many more varieties of the *divine*!—or the invisible and infinite Spirit, the true and only God. It mat-

ters little, it seems, which. Whether it be "Jehovah, Jove, or Baal,"—the nature of the object makes no difference:—the "religious sentiment" is there,—the "absolute religion" is there,—and that's enough. If, indeed, it be so, that "our certainty of divine truth cannot be more certain than the veracity of our inward organs of discernment," then all these various results of the exercise of these "inward organs" must be alike certain,—all equally right and true, seeing nothing can be more sure than the veracity of the internal Oracle by which they have all been dictated:—and the rites of worship, from the silliest to the most solemn, from the purest to the most obscene, being all alike the expression of the "religious sentiment," are all alike acceptable to "the High and Holy One." So that when, of old, "the men of Babylon made Succoth-Benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim,"—and all these were blended with the worship of "Jehovah the God of Israel,"—that God regarded all with the same complacency:—they were only varieties in the manifestation of the "absolute religion." Each nation worshipped according to their own "*highest ideal*;" and, estimated by its intensity, the last of the services should have been the most acceptable of all,—the energy of its principle having been such as to

overcome the strongest of nature's instinctive affections.—Nay, if God speaks to us *only* “from within,”—if no outward revelation can ever be made so sure to us as what is spoken by the inward voice—the voice of God in the soul; then must all these varieties be alike regarded as *revelations from Him!*—each having the same attestation,—the only one possible; each more absolutely sure than any amount of miraculous evidence could make it! If this must be regarded as the transcendentalism of *charity*, we must be allowed, at the same time, to regard it as the transcendentalism of *absurdity*; and to class the “*absolute religion*” with not a few more of the vagaries of a dreamy sentimentalism which have found their birth in the brains of our “great thinkers” in connexion with that all-meaning and nothing-meaning designation “THE ABSOLUTE!” We have at times been disposed to think that perhaps the term, when applied to *religion*, may have been intended to be understood according to its strict etymological import,—and so to mean religion as *loosed from* all relation to truth as discerned by the *intellect*, and from all mere *belief* of such truth,—and as seated in “THE SOUL,” in this its glorious independence of the understanding, and of—common sense.

Our spiritualists have a mortal aversion to “*propositions*,” or articles of *belief*. We must not call them articles of *faith*; for, according to them, *belief* is not *faith*, and has nothing to do with it. Belief

is a conviction in the understanding; faith is a sentiment in the soul:—the intellectual and the sentimental or emotional departments of our mental constitution being thus, in exercise as well as in theory, severed from each other. We hold, that although religion, in its emotional or sentimental exercises, belongs to the *heart*, or, in the terminology of the spiritualists, to the *soul*, yet that there can be nothing deserving the name that is not based on right conceptions of the Being who is the object of all religious feeling and worship. If it is not knowledge independent of feeling, as little is it feeling independent of knowledge. To sever religion from the intellect, is to convert it into senseless enthusiasm. True religion is neither light without heat, nor heat without light:—it is the two in union. We hold, that in Scripture *belief* and *faith* are one and the same thing. The very same results are imputed to *faith* and to *belief*,—meaning by belief the reception of certain *propositions* as *divinely true*. What our spiritualists call *faith*, we hold to be the *effect of faith*; the nature of that effect arising from the nature of that which is believed:—every man, woman, and child being aware that tidings, when seen to be true, affect the sentimental or emotional in us according to their kind;—good tidings inspiring joy, bad tidings grief; what is believed to be the word of one who is deserving of our confidence producing *trust*, and, according to the firmness of our belief, the *assurance of hope*.—“No intellectual proposition,”

says Mr. Newman,* "however true, can, as such, bring peace to a wounded soul." Certainly not, considered simply *as true*. But can no such proposition bring peace to a wounded soul, when not merely true, but *believed* to be true—*seen* to be true? That is the question. And can it, with any one, *be* a question? It is vain to say—"What is this faith? Is it assent to a *general* proposition? He does, indeed, assent; *but so do the devils*."† Is it not enough to account for the difference in the effect upon *devils* and upon *men*, of a believing assent to a "general proposition," that the proposition does *not* relate to *devils*, and *does* relate to *men*? Were the tidings of the gospel meant for devils, and addressed to devils, the faith of its "general propositions" would convey peace to the "wounded souls" of devils, just as it does to the wounded souls of men. For, although it is true, that there is in Scripture no "*special* proposition that the individual M. N. is forgiven through Christ,"—yet, when the proposition is addressed to *all* without exception,—and when each has thus the assurance that "*whosoever* cometh shall in no-wise be cast out," but shall "find rest unto his soul,"—then to every man that hears it, the proposition may give peace, as if it had been addressed, personally and by name, to himself. He believes it, and is at rest.—Now the facts and propositions

* 'Soul,' p. 72.

† Ibid. p. 72.

of the gospel are such as no "inward light" could ever have discovered. To no "spiritual consciousness" could they ever by possibility have occurred. No "voice within" ever could have whispered them. It is by an outward revelation they must come to us, if they come at all. And this outward revelation must be attested. Evidence must be given of its coming from God. Imparted to individuals by special inspiration, their inspiration and commission must be authenticated to their fellow-men. This, as we have seen, is the place for MIRACLES. If any will prefer the intimations of that inward Oracle which has given its responses in so many thousand forms of falsehood and delusion,—who can hinder him?—and if any man will be so ungrateful as, when he has got the benefit of the outward light, to disown the source from which it has come, and give the credit of it to the "light within"—who can hinder him? For our own parts, looking at the results of that light in all successive ages,—results proving it a light that has only

"—— led to bewilder, and dazzled to blind,"—

we are thankful for that better light which the "book-revelation" has furnished us:—and thankful that it has been ascertained to be "light from heaven"—the light of God—by so "many infallible proofs:"—and among the rest, by the "many miracles" both of "the author and finisher of the faith" himself, and of his commissioned ambassadors; mi-

rales, which so gloriously concur with its internal and its experimental evidences, in certifying its divine original.—“God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. . . . Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; GOD ALSO BEARING THEM WITNESS BOTH WITH SIGNS AND WONDERS, AND WITH DIVERS MIRACLES, AND GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST, ACCORDING TO HIS OWN WILL?”*

SECTION IV.

PRETENDED MIRACLES OF THE ROMISH CHURCH.

I must pass to a widely different subject.—While these rationalists, myth-mongers, and inward-light-

* Heb. i. 1—3; ii. 1—4.

men, will have *no* miracles,—there is another quarter, in which they are eagerly laid claim to, and in which they are to be had, such as they are, in rich abundance. —We protestants believe in the miracles of the Old and New Testaments. Our former chapters have been designed for a vindication of that belief. But, while we hold them to have been wrought, and wrought in marvellous magnitude and profusion, and without a failure, both by Christ and his apostles, for the purpose of introducing and establishing Christianity,—of settling it on a divine basis; we hold, at the same time, that having fully served that all-important end, they ceased;—whether from the time of the decease of the last apostle or of the last of the spiritually-endowed teachers of the word, on whom, for the communication of miraculous gifts, apostolic hands had been laid,—need not now be disputed. But papists say NO. The Romish church has all along appropriated to itself the power of miracles, in evidence of its being THE CHURCH—the only true church,—the church out of which there is no salvation. It forms one of the boasted glories of that church. But it is not the only instance, in which men, whether deceiving or deceived, have “gloried in their shame.”—First of all, it is rather an extraordinary circumstance, that, while, among churches called Christian, this may be said to be the only church worth speaking of that boasts of this distinction, it should happen to be one of those distinctions which characterize and mark out “THE APOSTASY” —

“THE MAN OF SIN”—“the SON OF PERDITION,” of the Apostle *Paul*,—and the mystical BABYLON—the BEAST and the FALSE PROPHET, of the Apostle *John*. “Power, and signs, and wonders, *of a lie*”—“*fictitious* power, and signs, and wonders,” are expressly specified by the former; and “miracles” by which “they that dwell on the earth”—“they that had received the mark of the Beast, and that worshipped his image”—were “*deceived*,”—as expressly by the latter. The two descriptions quite correspond. “*Lying* wonders” and “miracles that *deceive*,” cannot, as we have formerly endeavoured to show, be *true miracles*,—i. e. cannot be works requiring and evincing the interposition of the power of God, or the intervention of any superhuman power at his bidding:—inasmuch as no such miracle ever can deceive,—ever can be wrought in attestation of a falsehood;—unless we can imagine the God of truth—one of whose peculiar glories it is that he “cannot lie,”—to append his own exclusive signature and seal (which we believe all real miracles to be) to an untruth in sentiment, or an immorality in practice.—Now, if the church of Rome had not pretended to this power,—there would have been no system, on which, to any degree worth mentioning, this distinctive mark was to be found:—and thus, in one important particular, the prediction must have failed; and in searching history for the counterpart to the prophecy, we must thus far have been at a loss. But on Ecclesiastical Rome the mark *is*

found; and found in unmistakable union with all the rest.

It was my intention to have entered into some argumentative discussion on the differences between the New Testament miracles of our Lord and his apostles and—not the prodigies of Heathen superstition, or the marvellous legends of the gods of paganism, whether ancient and exploded or still subsisting,—(for, to dwell on these would be to insult the intellect of the weakest of my readers,)—but these so-called miracles of the Romish church. In the successive ages of that church, there has been a rich abundance of them. And they continue to the present day. Popery revels in miracles. But really I cannot but feel, that what I have just said as to pagan prodigies and legends is not less true regarding Romish miracles. To bring them, taking them in the gross, into comparison—whether in their matter or in their manner—with the miracles of Christ and his apostles would be to degrade the latter in a degree which neither my judgment, my conscience, nor my heart will allow me to be guilty of; or can even suggest sufficient cause why I should oblige myself to endure the distress and the shame of doing. Throughout the entire extent of the two sides, *contrast* is the proper word, not *comparison*.—In how very many cases have fraud and collusion been clearly detected and exposed! Take, as an example on a large scale, the case of the *Dominicans*, in their controversy with the *Franciscans*, when,

from the superstition of the age, they found the popularity of their cause declining, and resolved on effecting its restoration to favour, and to the coveted benefits of favour, by *miracle*. The means to which they had recourse, not less extraordinary for their cruelty and profanity than for their falsehood and their deliberate and protracted imposition, were at length, in consequence of their being over-acted, discovered by the very man who had allowed himself to be their gulled and befooled dupe, and came to be matter of judicial investigation and merited penal retribution. And in hundreds of other instances, more public or more private, has such detection and exposure taken place.—Then there have been so many others, in which the parties themselves, under the influence of various motives, good, bad, and indifferent, have voluntarily, or by constraint, made the disclosure.—So many more are to be placed to the account of the jesuitical principle, that there is no wrong, but virtue, in practising such impositions, when the result in view is the glory and the increase of the church, or the strengthening, in the hearts of its members, of the bond of attachment to it.—And so many more still have an explanation quite sufficiently satisfactory, in their being sources, in many cases most prolific, both by exacted fees and by free-will offerings, of revenue to the church and its priesthood.—The large proportion of them too have, in their nature, been such as can, without any stretch of imagination, be easily

conceived to come within the range of priestly artifice and cunning.—I might illustrate each of these remarks by appropriate cases. But it would be a humiliating waste of pains,—equally tedious and trifling. And not a few of them, moreover, are of such a character as to preclude the possibility of my introducing and detailing them. I feel myself laid under a peremptory interdict. I could not do it without feeling that I was violating at once the claims of becoming gravity, and the still more imperative demands of moral purity. A vast number of them, from their pitiful littleness and silliness, and from their fantastic and laughable grotesqueness, could not, with any propriety, be treated otherwise than with unsparing ridicule and scornful merriment, not quite the spirit that befits “the height of this great argument.” And some too there are in which the disgusting is added to the ludicrous; the filth, obscenity, and loathsomeness shutting them out from association with all that is decent,—much more with what is sacred and divine.

Let me select three of the more respectable cases of alleged miracle for a remark or two, and then group the rest together, and have done with them.

The FIRST I mention are—the miracles said to have been performed, or rather to have taken place, at the tomb of the *Abbè Paris*, in the beginning of last century. I mention these, because they are specially noted and commented on by Mr. Hume. There is no need, however, for entering into detail.

It will be quite enough to observe,—*first*, that there were thousands—many thousands of diseased persons who crowded to the tomb for cure; and of all these cases, there were but *nine* in which any cure was pretended to have been wrought. All the thousands, excepting these nine, proved failures. This of itself is quite enough to induce a suspicion, or more than a suspicion, that there was no supernatural power in operation, but that these nine cures were to be accounted for from natural causes. —In confirmation of this—*secondly*:—even of the alleged cures none were *instantaneous*. Many of those who frequented the tomb attended for days, weeks, and even months together. How long each of the nine said to have been cured were in attendance, we cannot tell. But *gradual* cures want one of the distinctive characteristics of *miracle*.—Then, *thirdly*:—“The patients were so affected by their devotion, their expectation, the place, the solemnity, and, above all, the sympathy of the surrounding multitude, that many of them were thrown into violent convulsions; which convulsions, in certain instances, produced a removal of disorders depending upon obstructions: * * * so that all the wonder we are called upon to account for is, that out of an almost innumerable multitude who resorted to the tomb for a cure of their disorders, and many of whom were there agitated by strong convulsions, a very small proportion experienced a beneficial change in their constitutions, especially in the action

of the nerves. And even of the cases alleged to have been cured, some were imperfect and some temporary."—Let the reader just look at the two following cases. They may serve as a sufficiently striking contrast to the miracles of the Gospel history. "A young man laboured under an inflammation of one eye, and had lost the sight of the other. The inflamed eye was relieved; but the blindness of the other remained. The inflammation had before been abated by medicine; and the young man, at the time of his attendance at the tomb, was using a lotion of laudanum. And, what is a still more important part of the case, the inflammation, after a time, returned."—Is it not a burlesque to dignify this at all with the title of *miracle*?—"Another young man had lost his sight by the puncture of an awl, and the discharge of the aqueous humour through the wound. The sight, which had been gradually returning, was much improved during his visit to the tomb; that is, probably, in the same degree in which the discharged humour was replaced by fresh secretions."—I might surely, as to this case too, repeat the same question. "And it is observable," adds *Dr. Paley*, from whom I quote, "that these two are the only cases which, from their nature, should seem unlikely to be affected by convulsions."—Read the accounts of the cures of the blind in the Gospel history, and compare them with these:—how sublimely simple in their manner!—and all instantaneous—perfect—and permanent.

The SECOND I select because it is an annually exhibited miracle at Naples, to the present day. It is what is called the *liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius!* With the history and character of the Saint I have at present nothing to do. What is said to be his coagulated blood (a portion of it that is) is kept in a vial, in the form of a hard ball. And on a certain annual festival,—amid superstitious ceremonies and devotions fitted to awaken interest, and to impress the minds of the spectators with the extreme difficulty, on account of their demerit, of obtaining the intervention of the Saint, and so of the power of God, to produce the effect, pretended to be wistfully longed for,—the officiating minister lifts the vial, and with his hand, brings it toward the skull of the Saint;—when, to the amazement and delight of the faithful, the hard mass begins to soften and to flow, till all is dissolved!—The best way to set the worthlessness of this wonder before the reader in its true light, will be, just to quote a few sentences from *Dr. Cumming's* recent lecture on Romish miracles:—

“I will read also a letter I received from Sir Culling Eardley, who was recently at Naples, in which he says, ‘When I was in Naples in 1844, I witnessed the “miracle” of the liquefaction of St. Januarius’s blood. I expressed to the Marchese di Santa Capita, Intendente of the Royal Palace of the Caserta, and Royal Commissioner appointed to witness the miracle, and to report the result to the

King of Naples, my persuasion that the miracle was a fraud. He introduced me to the Principe Monte Robini, who had in some way or other the management of the ceremony, and the Prince asked me what experiment would satisfy me. I appointed the next day to give an answer (the miracle is repeated several days running). The Prince met me accordingly in the vestry, and again asked me what would satisfy me. I said, "To dispense with the candle, and not to move the phial." He replied that the Queen was there that day in state, but that probably he would be able to do it to-morrow. I waited in the vestry till the ceremony was over, to know if the test would be applied the next day. The Prince came to me when the Queen was gone (the miracle having been performed), and I asked him if I was to come. "No," he said, "he had consulted the priests, and the experiment, if it gave satisfaction to *me*, would not satisfy the people," (*se la contenta lei, non contenterebbe el popolo.*) I am certain of the words, and I have not the slightest doubt that he and the priests knew that the "miracle" would be a failure. For any other particulars I refer you to my MS. Journal.' " *

"But I revert to the saint's blood, and in doing so, I would ask the following questions: Is the substance in the glass blood at all? To ascertain which I would propose to Dr. Newman, who desires us to

* Lecture, page 25.

go into evidence, to submit it to chemical analysis. This is a sure test. It is easy of application. If blood, is it the blood of a human being? Bishop Burnett says, that the blood of a duck was used at the Reformation for a similar purpose, and with similar pretensions, in England. In the third place, if human blood, is it the blood of the said St. Januarius, and of no one else? Prove it. Fourthly, does it liquefy by a miracle? or by the application of heat? or by a chemical process? or by other priestly manipulation? And, lastly, I observe, the exploit is so easily done, that strong proof seems to me to be required to lead one to accept it as miraculous. In order to show that this is so, I will attempt to perform this alleged miracle in your presence. I have had a glass bottle made as nearly like the original as possible. The mass of substance in the top bulb is perfectly solid; on applying the hand, you see, it very soon begins to melt. (Dr. Cumming here displayed the fac-simile of the Neapolitan miracle.) Now, I will tell you what this miracle is. It is a little otto of roses coloured with dragon's blood. I found that otto of roses became solid at about 40° or 42°; and therefore, after it has been reduced to that temperature, or lower, and thus becomes solid, on applying the heat of the hand to it for a minute it liquefies. You thus see how easily this supposed miraculous feat can be imitated, and how necessary it is, therefore, that Dr. Newman should not only show a red liquid

passing from a solid into a liquid state in a glass, but that he should also prove that that liquid is blood, and that it does not melt by any hand touching it, or other natural process, but by a special interposition of miraculous power."*

This surely is enough. We may be pretty well assured, that all such *testing* of the miracle as any protestant may propose will be carefully eschewed, and some convenient apology found or invented, for the refusal. It is a "LYING WONDER."

The THIRD I mention is that miracle of miracles among the devotees of popery,—the miracle of TRANSUBSTANTIATION.—The *discussion* of such a topic at large is of course out of the question. I must, for the present, regard it simply in its character as a miracle:—and even under this aspects have already, though in a different connection, adverted to it.—On the endless contradictions and absurdities involved in the fact, supposing the transmutation really effected,—with other points of a similar kind, I now say nothing. Regarding it simply in its miraculous character, I remark—1st, The miracle is *no* miracle:—for a miracle is a fact, of which the reality must be tested *by the senses*, and can be determined in no other way than by their testimony. But this is a miracle, which must not be tested by the senses; but is believed, and is required to be believed, not only independently of their testi-

* Pages 29, 30.

mony, but in direct opposition to it,—their testimony being, without exception of any instance or of any sense, a direct and palpable contradiction to it.—2dly, It is a miracle of which the evidence is *self-contradictory*, and therefore *self-destructive*:—for, while the faith of it professedly rests on divine testimony, in opposition to that of our own senses, it is, notwithstanding, on the testimony of sense, and of sense alone, that it does rest;—and it is doubly self-destructive,—in as much as, it not only rests on the testimony of sense, while professing the contrary, but it rests on the testimony of *one sense alone*, while it refuses the testimony of *four* at least of the senses, if not of *all the five*; thus believing on the ground of one fourth, or one fifth part of the very same description of evidence as that by which the opposite of what is believed is attested. For it is by *one sense only*—the sense of *sight*—that any man can know the words—“*This is my body*”—(on which his faith professes to rest) *to be in the Bible*; whereas all the five, or at the least four of them, attest the identity of the bread and the wine *before* and *after* the words of consecration.—And then—3dly, It is a miracle which, by the nature of the ground on which the belief of it rests, *destroys all other miraculous evidence*, and so *sweeps away one of the chief external proofs of our religion*. The evidence of miracles can be judged of *only by the senses*.—Now if, in one instance, our senses may so thoroughly deceive us, as to testify, not a mere

slight variation from truth, but its very opposite,—pronouncing that to be, beyond contradiction, bread and wine, which is neither the one nor the other, but a body of flesh and blood, in union too with soul and divinity,—if, we say, in this instance, our senses may so thoroughly deceive us, and our faith must be yielded in perfect contrariety to their united and peremptory testimony;—then, how and when are we to know that our faith ought to be in concurrence with that testimony? The unsettling of the evidence of our senses goes thus to the unsettling of this important branch of the evidence of the entire system of revealed truth!

I might show, further, the variety of extraordinary sequences which would follow, and follow on the sure ground of Bible testimony,—were the principle but fairly followed out of interpreting the verb “*is*” *literally*;—as by the advocates of the dogma of transubstantiation is done in the words, “This *is* my body.”—But I forbear. Besides that it would be diverging from my special subject, it would very soon lead me into the region of the ludicrous, presenting some of its most exquisite specimens,—which I would rather shun.—For the same reason, I must forbear all details respecting the legendary transportation, by angels, through the air and over the sea, of the House of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Loretto;—of many a wondrous vision of the Virgin, and of Jesus himself, granted to the enthusiastic raptures especially of sentimental female

worshippers;—of appearances of the devil, under various forms,—as an old man, and as a young man, as a huge black dog, or as a no less huge black cat;—of battles serious and comical with his Satanic majesty, and the various ways, some of them equally ludicrous and loathsome, in which, coming off, of course, with the worst, he takes his departure;—of delightful odours, as if from beds of roses and a very paradise of all sweet-scented flowers, from opening coffins and putrid graves;—of one saint blinded for three days by the light that streamed from an image of the Infant Jesus;—of the same image smiling sweetly on a female devotee—and, at her bidding and, withal, gentle chiding, stretching out its little arms and legs, to get its clothes easily and duly put on;—of sparks of light and fire issuing from the eyes and the mouths of devout saints, produced by the fire of love in their bosoms,—and of ribs divinely broken, and breast-bones divinely protruded, to make room for the hearts of certain other saints, which so swelled out with intense devotion that the ordinary cavity of the thorax could no longer hold them;—of the wonders performed by the virtue of holy relics,—and the wonders, moreover, neither few nor small, of such relics themselves; there being, not seldom, many more humeral, or femoral, or other bones of saints, than the good men could well be fancied to have had when they were alive,—many more than four legs of the ass that carried our Saviour,—and of the true cross,

pieces so numerous, that, were they gathered together, it has been roughly estimated, they would go far towards the construction of a first-rate ship of the line;—of holy coats, and weeping Madonnas, and winking and bleeding pictures, and all the other contemptible trumpery of a religion of traditional and superstitious externalism.—It is, indeed, “for a lamentation,” that in the middle of the nineteenth century, in an age that vaunts of its rapidly advancing light, so many thousands and tens of thousands should be thus gulled and befooled, and cheated of their spiritual freedom and of their soul’s salvation, by deceptions so pitiful, in support of the self-justifying errors of an antichristian system. And of a vast number of the pretended miracles the true secret may be learned from our great Reformer, MARTIN LUTHER:—“In the monastery of Isenach,” says he, “stands an image—which I have seen. (It was Mary with her Child.) When a wealthy person came thither to pray to it, the child turned away its face from the sinner to its mother, as if it refused to give ear to his praying, and was therefore to seek mediation and help from Mary the mother. But if the sinner gave liberally to that monastery, then the child turned to him again:—and, if he promised to give more, then the child showed itself very friendly and loving, and stretched out his arms over him in the form of a cross. But this image was made hollow within, and prepared with locks, lines, and screws;

—and behind it stood a knave, to move them:—
and so were the people mocked and deceived, taking it to be a miracle wrought by Divine Providence.”*

* Magic, pretended miracles, and remarkable natural phenomena. Rel. Tract Society’s monthly volume—page 154.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION:—NATURE OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES, AND APPROPRIATENESS TO THE DESIGN OF HIS MISSION:—IMPORTANCE OF THAT DESIGN, AND OF OUR DULY APPRECIATING IT.

WE now draw this discussion to a close.—I have said that *contrast* is the word which fitly expresses the difference, both as to their matter and their manner, between all such pretended miracles as those of which I have just been speaking and the wonders recorded in the Gospel histories, whose reality we have been endeavouring to establish:—wonders, wrought with a simplicity so sublimely dignified,—so infinitely removed from all affected and boastful parade,—with all the indications, guileless and unpretending, of a heart full to overflowing with devotion to God and benevolence to men;—and, at the same time, with an authority so commanding, and with a power so unfailing,—in every case, the greatest as well as the least, so instantaneously and thoroughly, because divinely, efficacious. Should any of my readers wish to see the true and the false,—the divine and the human,—in perfect

and faith-confirming contrast,—let them peruse the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and then dip into the lives of some of the canonized saints of the Romish Calendar.

And now, let me request the reader's attention to a point of a highly pleasing and interesting character, and which, if not itself strictly and directly evidential, affords a strong collateral support to all that is so. It is a point, of which the contemplation has many a time been to my own mind a spring of peculiarly lively delight.—I refer to *the striking and beautiful congruity between the nature of our blessed Lord's miraculous works and the nature of the errand on which he came into the world.*—A MIRACLE is simply a work of supernaturally exerted divine power,—an indication, consequently, of divine interposition,—and thus an attestation to the divine authority of the commission and the message of him by whom (to use the ordinary and sufficiently well-understood phraseology) it is performed. Of such a work there is only one absolutely essential quality—that of *supernaturalness*,—its being a work surpassing human or created power. In this respect, it matters not whether it be for weal or for woe. Simply as proofs of divine authority, it was not at all necessary that the miracles of Jesus should be miracles of benevolence or mercy. A miracle of judgment is as much a miracle, as a miracle of kindness. The plagues of Egypt were as conclusive proofs of the divine mission of Moses, as were the

pillar of cloud and fire, the dividing of the sea, the water from the rock, and the bread from heaven. The power by which the miracles of Jesus were wrought was a power to which, with all the resources of nature at its command, it was as easy to destroy as to save. Instead of restoring the sick to soundness, and the dead to life, He by whom it was put forth might have smitten, in a moment, with all the varieties of disease and death. Instead of feeding famishing thousands with food created on the instant for their craving appetites, he might have "called for a famine on the land, and broken the staff of bread." He might have commanded the pestilence to waste, or the "fire from heaven to consume," those who set themselves against him. His divine mission might have been accredited, as really and as effectually, by the omnipotent infliction of evil as by the omnipotent bestowal of good.—But between miracles of such a character and the nature of his errand into the world there would have been any thing but congruity. The commission and its evidence would have been strangely at variance. His errand was one of love. It was the grand manifestation to guilty men of God's "delighting in mercy;" the opening of his very heart, and the outflowing of the infinitude of its benevolence. His miracles, accordingly, were not merely proofs of his divine commission; they were, at the same time, illustrations the most appropriate of its benignant nature and design.—To have

scattered destruction around him, as proof that he had come to save; to have smitten with suffering and death, in evidence of his bearing a commission to confer blessedness and life;—to have inflicted temporal curses, as a manifestation of the gracious purpose of Heaven to bestow for his sake spiritual and eternal blessings!—we are unable for a moment to associate in our minds incongruities so palpable,—moral contrarieties so flagrant and monstrous. The union in the miracles of Jesus, of power and benevolence, of the unlimited command of resources and the disposition to make all available for the ends of mercy,—is one of the most inviting and interesting lights in which we can contemplate them. His own character, and the character of “the Father that sent him” (of whom, without presumption, he could say—“I and my Father are one”) is thus presented to us under the most attractive and engaging of all possible aspects:—and (what it is our more immediate object in these remarks to impress) under just the aspect in which it is the design of the gospel to place it. Power divorced from benevolence is, in any character, most repulsive and alarming. *Infinite* power thus unassociated with goodness, is too dreadful for the language of men or of angels to express. But here—might and mercy are united. Mercy dictates to might, and might executes for mercy, the works of divine beneficence!

Another thing it is important to bear in remem-

brance:—namely, that every miracle which the Divine Saviour wrought *had an immediate bearing on the great end of his mission,—on the purpose for which he had come into the world.* In no one of them was that purpose out of his view. In the exercise of his miraculous power, he scattered around him, during the short term of his public ministry, an immense profusion of temporal blessing. His miracles were without number:—and of every one of them, to a greater or less extent,—through a wider or a narrower circle of kindred and friends,—personal and social gratification and joy were the natural results. But, vast as was the aggregate of earthly good thus diffused, no one of the works by which it was produced could be said to have answered its proper and primary end, if its effect reached no farther. Every one of them was performed in proof of his divine commission as “the Christ, the Saviour of the world:”—performed, therefore, in order to men’s conviction and acceptance of the saving truth, that they might thus become partakers of the salvation which the faith of it imparts. They were far from having answered their main design, when they had given sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the diseased, bodily soundness to the lame and the mutilated, and mental sanity to the lunatic and the demoniac, life to the dead, and joy in their restoration to the living. Their chief intention was higher,—incomparably higher. It was the *salvation of souls.*

That was the grand end of his mission and his ministry; of his life and of his death; of all he did, all he taught, and all he suffered. That to a mind possessing sensibilities so tender and so holy the delight must have been exquisite, in witnessing the personal and social happiness which was the result of the doings of his power,—who can doubt?—when the blind saw, when the deaf heard, when the lame walked, when “the tongue of the dumb sang,” when the lepers were cleansed and restored to purity and to privilege, when the diseased were made whole, and the maniac and the possessed were seated at his feet “clothed and in their right mind,” when the dead were given back to the embraces of their weeping friends, and tears of grief exchanged for tears of joy! But still—“his soul was not satisfied”—his joy was not full—unless he saw something more;—unless he saw sinners turned to God, and made partakers of higher and better blessings,—blessings spiritual and eternal. “These things I *say*,” was his language,—and with the same truth he might have added—these things I *do*—“that ye might be saved.” This was then—and this is still—the great and gracious end. It is only when in saved sinners he “sees of the travail of his soul,” that he is “satisfied.” And such, in all their proclamations of his doctrine, and all their reasonings in its support, ought to be the high aim of all his servants. If our argument does not, directly or indirectly, contribute to this result,—“what doth it profit?”

With one observation more, then, I conclude.—*The value of evidence must be estimated by the value of that which it is adduced to prove.*—There is no other standard of valuation, by which its worth can be fairly tested. Of proof the most abundant and the most conclusive what *is* the worth, if that which it certifies is but of trivial moment,—something of which neither the reception nor the refusal—the faith nor the unbelief—affects, in any material degree, our well-being for either time or eternity? We might, however, be previously sure enough, that that God whose wisdom is equal to his power—both being infinite—would never be found putting forth that power in works of wonder for any end inferior to the means thus employed to effect it,—to attest to his intelligent creatures what was unworthy of such interposition,—what it was of little or no consequence to them whether it was known and believed by them or not. And thus, from the very nature and amount of the proof,—from the very fact of such miracles of knowledge and of power having been divinely employed to attest it,—we might *a priori*—before being informed what it was—have confidently inferred the importance of the mission and the message of Him whom that Book whose authority we have been endeavouring to vindicate is chiefly designed to make known.—God does nothing in vain. He adapts his means to his ends. He does every thing in due proportion; every thing “by weight and measure.” He does not

launch his thunderbolts, to crush a fly. He does not work miracles to attest either what in itself is insignificant and worthless, or what can be well enough known, and rendered sufficiently sure, without them.

There is therefore a question remaining, to which, indeed, we have already more than once adverted, but which once more, ere we close, we would press upon every reader's serious and earnest consideration—the question *what is Christianity?* A great deal has many a time been written, and written well, on its external evidences, whilst the views entertained of its nature have been vague, inadequate, and false. No question, then, can be more important. Without just conceptions here, of what avail are all our discussions of evidence?—Were I called upon, then, to say, what is the great purpose for which God has given us his inspired word,—his “Book-revelation,”—I should adopt, for my answer, the terms of the pythoness, in the Acts of the Apostles, when, following Paul and Silas, she shouted after them,—“These men are the servants of the Most High God, WHO SHOW UNTO US THE WAY OF SALVATION.”—The very terms imply, like all the rest which the Book, on this subject, employs, that human nature is a moral ruin:—that man is a fallen creature;—*guilty*, and needing *pardon*,—*sinful*, and needing *spiritual renovation*. And the salvation to be effected includes both. This is THE LESSON OF THE BIBLE; this the discovery, which all the mira-

cles, whether of power or of knowledge, recorded in it, were meant to attest as having divine authority,—the authority of Him to whom we have, each one of us, our final account to render, and by whose verdicts our respective states for eternity are to be settled. Nothing, therefore, can surpass—nothing equal—in importance the inquiry, what is this “way of salvation?”—what is **THE GOSPEL**?—what God’s **METHOD OF MERCY** for our fallen race which it reveals? If we miss the truth here, of what profit to us will be even the fullest and most correct acquaintance with the mere evidences of revelation? It is not the belief that the Bible is such a revelation that is to save us:—it is the belief of what that revelation contains. A man may believe Sir Isaac Newton to have been the author of all the works ascribed to him, and yet hold theories of his own, subversive of all the principles of Sir Isaac’s philosophy:—nay, he may even call himself a Newtonian, and yet have formed most mistaken notions of those principles, and may thus be a professed admirer of Newton, while he is admiring what Newton would have disowned. So may a man hold the belief of the Bible having been “given by inspiration of God,”—and yet, under the sway of one or other, or several in union, of the various prejudices, mental and moral, to which human nature is subject, he may so misconceive, or so pervert, its leading and most essential lessons, as to rob it of its chief divine characteristics, and of all that

is adapted to man's true condition, and available for his effectual recovery. There is a way—or more ways than one—of explaining Christianity, which amounts to *explaining it away*. Even by some who profess to believe it divine, it is so reduced, so attenuated and frittered away, so stripped of its most essential and distinctive peculiarities,—as to afford good ground to the infidel to scoff at miracles; for, in good sooth, the residuum ceases to be worth a miracle! But when we regard THE GOSPEL as the suggestion of infinite love, and the device of infinite wisdom, for the purpose of restoring an apostate nature from its guilt, its moral pollution, and its consequent degradation and misery, and bringing it back to its pristine state of favour, and purity, and honour, and true happiness;—and for effecting this, moreover, in full accordance with the unsullied glory of every attribute of the divine character, the full security of every claim of the divine law, and every principle of the divine government,—thus investing the divine throne with a fresh girdle of holy light, and giving it an accession of stability in the fear and the love of a wondering and admiring universe:—we have then the perfection of consistency. We see a scheme, infinitely worthy of the God of light and love from whom it comes,—bearing, like all his other works, the impress of his Name:—and while, meeting as it does the consciousnesses and the exigencies of the human spirit, it commends itself to mankind as “its own witness,”—we see, at the same

time, a divine suitableness of the external proofs of its origin to that which they attest,—a perfect congruity between the grandeur of the evidence and the magnificence of the scheme;—wonders of divine power attesting wonders of divine mercy;—the scheme and its attestation thus alike divine, and alike glorious!

In all this there is brought before the delighted mind A DIVINE HARMONY.—I have no idea of *letting down* the gospel—"the glorious gospel of the blessed God,"—to meet the "vain imaginations" of a spurious and presumptuous philosophy, which in various ways—inconsistent with each other and in some instances in no very good agreement with themselves—fancies it has discovered something higher and better, to which that gospel must now give place, prophets and apostles retiring into the shade,—and which itself too, they are constrained to admit, lofty as their estimate of it may be, may possibly, by and by, in the natural progression of the human intellect and elevation of human society, yield the palm to something higher and better still:—for this idolatry of the human nature recognizes no humiliating limit to the human powers.—But, if the Gospel be indeed what, in the Book which reveals it, it is represented to be—GOD'S PLAN FOR SAVING A LOST WORLD—for effecting THE REDEMPTION AND REGENERATION OF MEN,—it necessarily follows, that no folly can be more foolish, and no hope more hopeless. It was not "the wisdom of this world" *before* the fulness

of time only, that was "foolishness with God;" but the wisdom of this world universally,—then, and since, and to the end. God's plans, and God's works, are all perfect:—and perfection cannot be improved. The scheme of redemption, like all the rest, has the stamp of this characteristic perfection. And, being perfect—unimprovably perfect—it is permanent. From the time of man's fall (let the sceptic smile as he may at a doctrine which alone accords with the entire history of mankind, and especially their religious history) and the first intimation of a Saviour, this scheme became the subject of promise, and type, and prophecy, and the leading star of providence. The entire divine administration over our world came then to have, for its chief end, the preparation of the way for its execution. And amongst other objects in the divine intention, there was the presenting of an experiment on a large scale, illustrative of the impotence of man's wisdom and man's power for effecting his own recovery:—so that God's plan might come to be unfolded, when all man's plans, such as they were, had proved abortive. There was thus shown to be a "*dignus vindice nodus*:"—and, only inverting the order of the poet's terms, the world was lost—" *nisi Deus intersit*." It was thus "*after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, that it pleased God, by the preaching of foolishness, to save them that believe*." And, as the previous time had been the time of preparation for the

execution of the plan, the subsequent time was to be the time for the development of its results;—during which “the foolishness of God” was to prove itself “wiser than men,” and “the weakness of God stronger than men;”—when the Gospel—“the preaching of the cross”—was to demonstrate itself, in human experience, “the power of God and the wisdom of God” for man’s salvation. And thus it has been; thus it is; and thus it shall be. Paul’s determination in his day, was, to “know nothing” among those to whom he preached, “save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Is this determination now to be abandoned? Is it out of date? Did it suit Paul’s time, but can no longer suit ours? While Paul “preached Christ crucified,”—in preference to the “wisdom” which “the Greeks sought after,” have *we* “sought after wisdom” so much more successfully than the Greeks of ancient days, that we may feel ourselves warranted to regard our own discoveries as “a more excellent way?” Has the Gospel ceased to be what it was in apostolic times, —“the wisdom of God?” Was it the wisdom of God only for that age?—Then too it was “the *power*” as well as the wisdom of God:—has its power failed? Has it proved itself incompetent,—lost its regenerating and saving efficacy?—and is something else, more elevated and refined,—some new revelation to the “inward light” of our “great thinkers”—to take its place, for the future progress of the race, in “going on unto perfection?” Has

“the cross of Christ become of no effect?” Who that looks at either its past or its present history will dare to say so? It has proved itself, and is proving itself, the only really effective instrument for the elevation and renewal of mankind. May God in mercy prevent any high-minded speculations from taking the place of the doctrine of the cross, in the minds and in the pulpits of our rising ministry! It is just in proportion as the pulpit has confidence in the Saviour’s cross, that it will prove successful in subduing the world to the Saviour’s crown. What we want now is—a larger measure of simple-hearted “faith in God,” that He will bless his own truth—and his own truth alone—for effecting the moral and spiritual renovation of men’s souls. There is no doctrine but the doctrine of “Christ crucified,” which He will ever commission his Spirit to accompany, for that end. The cross is as “mighty to save,” as in the day when it was first preached: and so it will be “till the end come.” The hour of Christ’s death,—when he “bowed his head, and said It is finished,”—was the central point of our fallen world’s history. All preceding time looked forward to it; all subsequent time looks back to it. Of Him who then died,—“offering up himself” as “the propitiation for the sins of the world,”—the Spirit of prophecy has said—“His name shall endure for ever:—his name shall be continued as long as the sun:—men shall be blessed

in him:—all nations shall call him blessed.”* While there remains a sinner on earth to be saved, the divine virtue of that NAME will remain to save him. It is not a name that is to have its day, and be forgotten,—lost in the brighter effulgence of others that are to arise after it. It stands alone; and it is imperishable:—through time, the theme of earth,—through eternity, of Heaven.—There is one grand miracle yet in reserve;—a miracle, by which the glory of that Name, and of Him who bears it, shall be consummated. His own lips have predicted it. —“The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.”† Then, the “great white throne” shall be erected:—“The judgment shall be set, and the Books shall be opened:”—and “the dead, small and great,” shall “stand before God:”—and they shall be “judged, every man, according to his works.”—Such are the solemn statements of that “Book-revelation,” whose authority we have been endeavouring to establish. Their importance no sane man will deny. It is inexpressible—incalculable. And the question—ARE THEY TRUE?—is the very first question which every sane man will be anxious to have satisfactorily settled. Let every reader, in dead earnest, lay it

* Psalm lxxii. 17.

† John v. 28, 29.

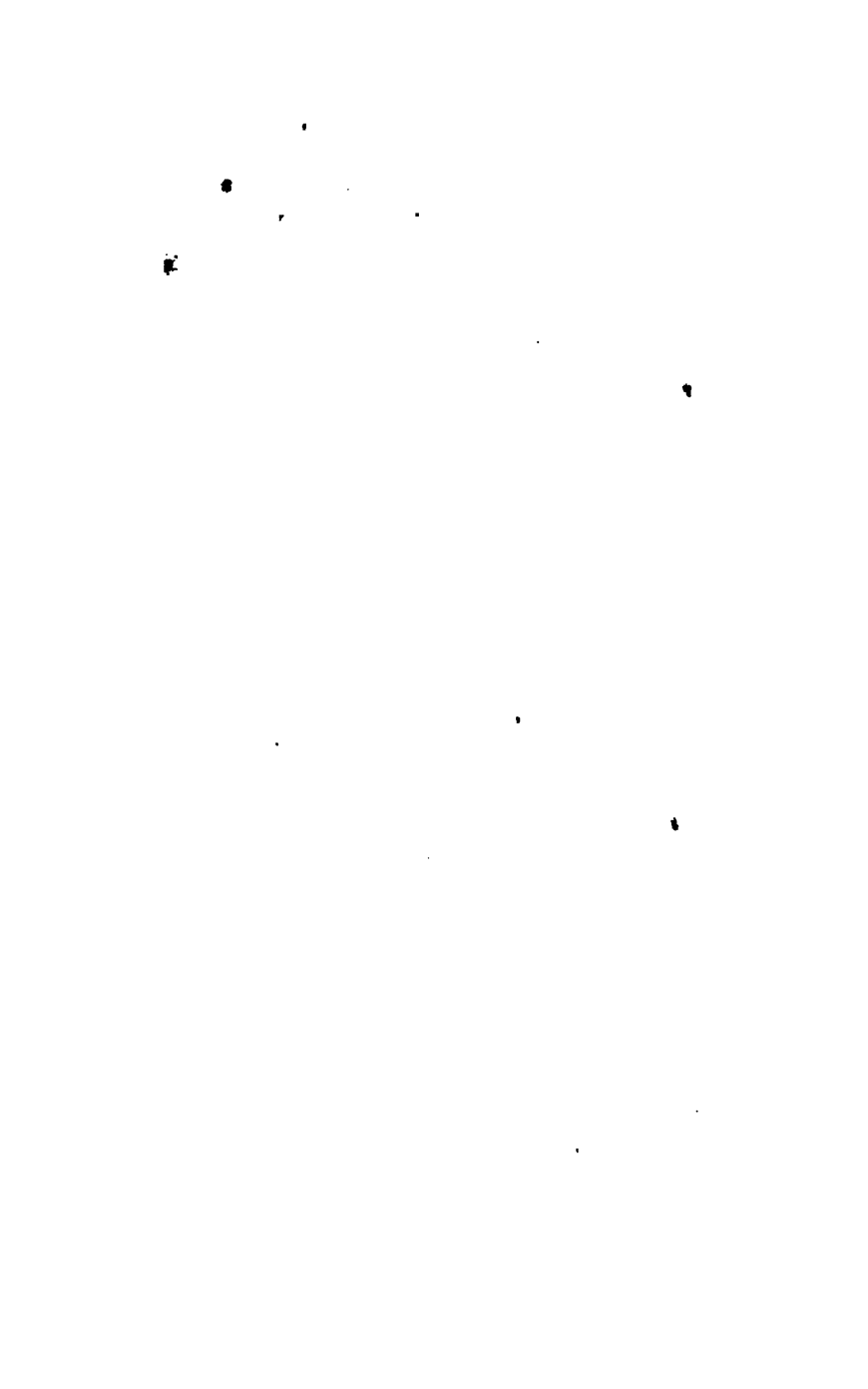
to heart. Let him examine it—deliberately—candidly—prayerfully—thoroughly;—and COME TO A DECISION!—And may the Divine Spirit “lead” the sincere and anxious inquirer “into all truth,”—and impart to him that best of evidences of its divine *origin*—the experience of its divine *influence*;—the miracle of his own spiritual regeneration;—the “WITNESS IN HIMSELF!”

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